

# “HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ANGER”

Building Great Relationships - Part 6 of 9

1 Corinthians 13:5 August 24, 2008

“*Love is not easily angered.*” (1 Corinthians 13:5) Do you believe that? Do you live by that? Now it doesn’t say that love never gets angry because there are times when getting angry is the loving thing to do. But if “*Love is not easily angered*” why are we most likely to get angry with are those we love the most. We have to learn to control our anger, and there are six steps we can make toward that end.

## 1. Resolve to Manage it

Understand that God gave us the capacity to get angry. Anger is not necessarily a sin. God gets angry. It’s how we manage it. Anger managed correctly becomes an asset rather than a liability. We can’t avoid anger but we can learn to control it, to manage it. We make the commitment to control our anger rather than let our anger control us. We stop saying that we can’t control it and instead, find the resolve to manage it. *“It is better to be slow-tempered than famous; it’s better to have self-control than to control an army.”* (Proverbs 29:22) And we can’t justify our anger by claiming that we can’t control it because that’s not true. Have you ever been in the midst of an ugly, angry argument when the phone rings? Miraculously when we pick up the phone, our anger is under control. We’ve got more control than we think we do. We need the resolve to manage it, and with God’s help, we can.

## 2. Realize the Cost

There is always a price tag. Proverbs 29:22 *“A hot tempered man gets into all kinds of trouble.”* Can you relate to any of these verses? *“Hot tempers cause arguments.” “Anger causes mistakes.” “People with hot tempers do foolish things.”* The Bible says that *“The fool that provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left.”* When I lose my temper I lose. We can’t make it to the top if we’re continually blowing our top. The word “danger” is the word “anger” with a “d” in front of it. And anger is dangerous. Through anger we can lose our reputation, our spouse, our job, our health. An article in Parade magazine asked “Is Anger Killing You? New evidence about the heart shows that reducing the hostility in your life can prolong it.” Parents, we may get short term pay offs by motivating our kids through anger, but in the long run we lose. Because anger always alienates. It turns people off rather than turning them on. It causes them to be apathetic and/or angry with us. It doesn’t get the results we seek. Anger costs us something and even then it doesn’t work.

## 3. Reflect Before Reacting

Don’t respond impulsively. Proverbs 29:11 *“A stupid man gives free rein to his anger; a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.”* Delay is a great tool in controlling anger. I’m not saying delay it for a day, but for maybe for five minutes. Count to 10. Take a time out. The longer we hold our temper, the better it gets, and the more control we have. We need to stop, reflect and think it through. If we don’t, we almost always do the wrong thing. We need to reflect before reacting. We need to get in the habit of taking a step back, waiting a few minutes and looking at the situation from God’s point of view. *“...a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.”* “Cool it” is a Biblical term. Today we might translate that, “The wise man waits and chills.”

Thomas Jefferson said, “When you get angry count to 10; when you get real angry count to 100.” Reflect before reacting.

“*A man’s wisdom gives him patience.*” Try to understand your anger. Look at it. Analyze it. “Why am I getting angry?” Ask yourself three questions because the more understanding we have, the more understanding we will be. The more we understand our kids, the more we understand our spouse, the less opportunity we have to get angry. So ask yourself three questions: “Why am I angry? What do I really want? How can I get it?”

You see, anger is never really the root problem in our life. It’s a symptom, a warning light. It tells us something is wrong. Anger is a symptom that says one of three things is happening. Either we are hurt, fearful, or frustrated. Those things make us angry. When we get angry we need to stop and analyze just what is going on. Am I hurt? Afraid? Threatened? Frustrated?

With hammer in hand I hit a nail, but it is the one on my thumb. I hurt! And because I’m hurt, I’m angry. Or we’re afraid, like an animal trapped in a corner. When threatened, the animal will attack, and so do we. Or we feel like we are losing something valuable, maybe time, freedom or an important relationship. We get angry because we feel threatened. And then there is frustration. Bud Abbott said, “Who’s on first, What’s on second, I Don’t Know’s on third.” Lou Costello just wanted to know the name of guy playing first base, but the answer never came in a form that he could understand, and we could see his frustration rise. When we are in a conversation where we just want a simple answer but none of the answers make sense, we, too, get frustrated, and we get angry. Hurt, frustration and fear cause our anger, but “*A man’s understanding (wisdom) gives him patience.*”

#### **4. Release My Anger Appropriately**

Ephesians 4:26 “*If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin.*” Again, anger is not necessarily sinful. God gets angry. Jesus got angry. And God created us with the capacity to get angry. But we can get angry the right way or the wrong way. It can be helpful or harmful. We need to learn to express our anger in helpful, appropriate ways. After all, nothing can ruin a relationship faster than anger. Nothing. So “... *do not let your anger lead you into sin.*”

To deny that we’re angry when we are angry is a sin. That’s lying. Yet we’d rather be angry than admit our anger. That’s foolish, dishonest, and sinful. But anger is not necessarily wrong, if we know how to release it. Most people learn to express anger when they’re two or three years old and as adults, they’re still using the habits they started back then. But it doesn’t work. It often does more harm than good. Blowing up at people never produces lasting change. It only leads to more anger, and maybe alienation. We know that, but still we do it. But we can learn to manage our anger in appropriate ways, and to correctly express it. There are books that can help us like [The Language of Love](#) by Gary Smalley and [Make Anger Your Ally](#) by Neil Warren. Both of those books can help us learn how to express anger in positive ways. And we also need to look at scripture.

Proverbs 29:11 “*A fool gives full vent to his anger; a wise man keeps himself under control.*” There is a myth that many people believe that’s just not true. Many psychologists teach that

everybody has a certain amount of anger in their life. And if we just vent that anger, if we get it off our chest, if we empty ourselves, we'll feel better. It leads to the Primal Scream Therapy where we scream it all out. Or we tell people what we think no matter who it hurts. If we get the anger out, we will be healed. Unfortunately, it doesn't work. First of all we do not have a set amount of anger in us, but we are often anger producing factories. Study after study shows that aggression always produces more aggression. It's inevitable. Angry outbursts lead to more anger, not less. And since we reap what we sow, all that anger comes back to us, comes back at us. In fact in dealing with anger, there are three things that we just can't do.

**1. Don't repress it.** It would seem logical that if we don't vent our anger that maybe we should just hold it in. Repressing means we push it down inside us and that always hurts us mentally, physically, and in our relationships. When we swallow our anger, our stomach keeps score. Our bodies were not made to live in a constant state of alert, and that's what anger does. It keeps us on high alert. Then we burn out with things like headaches, colitis, ulcers, high blood pressure, back ache, and on and on. Repressed anger will chose the weakest part of our body and attack.

**2. Don't suppress it.** Suppressing is when we try to pretend that it doesn't exist. It is saying, "It wasn't a big deal" when it really was. That, too, comes back on us. Instead of saying "I just let it go, it wasn't a big deal," We need to admit that we are hurt, threatened, fearful, and frustrated. We need to admit it and deal with it. Take some action to make things right.

**3. Don't express it.** There are lots of ways to express anger. We think of the volcano of a guy who just blows up, but there are also pouters, who try to get their way through sympathy, by crying, "Woe is me." And there are manipulators who never confront the real issue. They just make constant jabs, little attacks around the edges. It's all anger. And all these ways are self defeating. They won't work.

What will work? The Bible says **Confess it.** Admit it. Admit it to yourself, to others, to God. "I'm angry!" And even more important than just admitting that you're angry is admitting why you're angry. "I'm hurt, frustrated, threatened by what you did or said. I'm afraid that I'm going to lose something." Deal with the issue. Confess it. But often we would rather be angry than say that we are angry, and just why we are angry. And so I have to ...

#### **5. Re-pattern My Mind.**

Romans 12:2 "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" The way we act is determined by the way we feel. The way we feel is determined by the way we think. To change the way we act, we've got to change the way we think. I'm acting angry because I feel angry because I am thinking angry thoughts. To change the patterns of improper anger management, we need to think differently. We re-pattern our minds. "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*"

Neil Warren encourages people to write a letter to themselves depicting their ideal response to anger. Think about what makes you anger and then write out how you would really like to respond to it. Be as vivid and detailed as possible. Ask yourselves questions like, "Do I enjoy

getting angry?” “Does it produce the intended results?” “Could I get better results with a more effective way?” “How would I be different?” Gary Smalley suggests that after writing it down, we read it aloud once a week for 26 weeks. Read it in the presence of someone who can help keep us accountable. That’s a lot of work? It requires us to be very serious about changing our angry habits. How serious are you about getting control of your anger? And if you do write it out, use some of these Bible verses so the Word of God can fill your mind, and you will be transformed. It is a renewing of the mind and then we can change.

The truth is, angry people are insecure people. The more insecure I am, the more things tick me off, the more irritable I am. A crying baby can be quieted if they know that they are loved, if they are warm, secure, and accepted. And we are the same way. When we understand how much God loves us, how much we matter to Him, when we see how secure we are in Christ, then our anger is going to diminish. It all has to do with what we think or believe about ourselves. So read Ephesians 1 and Romans 8. These are classic chapters on finding our security in Christ. Read them over and over. They are anti-anger verses because the better we feel about ourselves, the less angry we become. Then we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

## **6. Relate to People Who Are Patient.**

Proverbs 22:24 *“Do not make friends with a hot tempered man. Do not associate with one easily angered or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.”* Anger is contagious. At times you have probably been infected by somebody else’s anger. Those situations when the volume, energy, and emotions get all ramped up and you do, too. Anger is contagious. If you want to change the habits of inappropriate anger management, stay away from people who put you in those situations that are prone to anger. Choose friends who know how to manage their anger. That’s one of the benefits of church. That’s why I believe in joining a church family and getting involved. Here we find people with positive values, while the world teaches us something far different.

The next time you turn on TV, pay attention to all the inappropriate responses to anger. It happens in dramas and comedies. What is that teaching our kids? When you get angry, shoot someone. Hit someone. Stab somebody. Yell and swear. Develop some conspiracy to get revenge. We need to balance that with appropriate models like what we are talking about today. After all, anger is a learned behavior. And since it is learned, it can be unlearned. Parents, every time we blow up and lose our cool, we’re modeling and teaching our kids how to handle anger in inappropriate ways. Whatever we’re doing, we’re modeling and teaching our kids.

James Dobson says, “Successful marriages are not those marriages where anger or conflict does not exist. Rather, successful marriages are where they’ve learned to manage their anger. When anger is managed it produces great marriages.” If we didn’t have any anger, we’d just be a vegetable. God made us with the capacity to get angry. But anger managed properly, produces great friendships. And those are the people we need to be, and who we need to be with. For if we can correctly communicate the language of love, if we learn how to manage our anger, we can help diminish the level of hostility and violence in our world.

How can Jesus help us overcome our anger? By attacking the root problem. Jesus talks about our hurt, our frustrations, our fears. He wants to replace that hurt with His healing love.

*How To Manage Your Anger – 8/24/08*

You may have been hurt in the past, maybe you were abused, rejected, unloved, unwanted, maybe you could never get the approval of somebody who was important to you. Your pain matters to God. He cares about it. He wants to replace that hurt with His love. He wants to replace your frustration with a new level of peace. Jesus wants to replace our fears and insecurities with His power and His peaceful presence because “*God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.*” My guess is that God has been talking to some of you about your need to deal with your anger. I hope that this might help you find God’s power and God’s peace. And in your life may it be so. Amen.