

Handling Anger Wisely
November 21, 2021 – Pastor Gary Post

- I. Why is Everyone So Angry
 - A. Anger in the news, politics, social media, workplaces, families
 - B. Destructive impact of uncontrolled anger in families.
- II. Where Does Anger Come From and is it Always a Sin?
 - A. **Question:** Is all anger sinful or rather a reflection of God's emotions?
The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.
Numbers. 14:18

Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, making offerings to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live...? Jeremiah. 44:8
 - B. Anger itself may not be wrong—but our response may be.
Words are weapons, and they do damage an apology can't repair.
 - C. Angry responses now are sometimes related to past stored-up anger
"For 15 years we did not understand this simple truth: *Our marriage problems didn't start in our marriage.* There were childhood wounds beneath our most irritating behaviors."
Milan and Kay Yerkovich, How We Love
 - D. Gary Chapman: Three Step Process for Releasing Stored-Up Anger
 1. Think back, make a 2-column list of people and how they hurt you
 2. Focus on each in prayer, asking God to allow you to release the anger and unforgiveness you feel, and turning them over to God.
 3. Ask God to release you from the control of that stored up anger, and unforgiveness, and live out the grace and love of Jesus Christ
- III. Three Responses to the Emotion of Anger: Nabal, David and Abigail
 - A. David's request for a favor: **I Sam. 25:1-8**
 - B. Nabal's response to David's request: **I Sam. 25:9-11**
A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
Proverbs 15:1
 - C. Uncontrolled anger is abusive and destroys relationships
"Emotional abuse systematically degrades, diminishes, and can eventually destroy the personhood of the abused."
Leslie Vernick, The Emotionally Destructive Marriage
 - D. David's knee-jerk response to Nabal's insult: **I Sam. 25:12-17**
 - E. Two Biblical principles for handling anger in relationships:
Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. James 1:19-20

And don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27
 - F. The destructive impact of explosive anger on relationships
"Explosive, angry behavior is never constructive. It not only hurts the person at whom it is directed, it destroys the self-esteem of the person who is out of control."
Dr. Gary Chapman, Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion, p. 85
 - G. Five Steps to Handle Your Anger (Gary Chapman, Anger...)

1. **Consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry** Stops knee-jerk response of lashing out with angry words/actions
 2. **Restrain your immediate response**
Break the cycle by not taking the action you typically would, either angry venting or withdrawal into silence and emotional distance,
 3. **Locate the focus of your anger**
Exactly what was said or done and how serious is it really?
 4. **Analyze your options**
Ask yourself, "Will my words and actions lead to a positive resolution, are they best for all, or just intended to inflict pain?"
 5. **Take constructive action**
Prayerfully choose to either overlook the offense or gently confront the other person, listen, act with grace and forgiveness.
Adapted from Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion, Gary Chapman
- H. Abigail's wise response to anger that saved her family I Sam. 25:18-31
1. She took constructive action to address David's concerns/needs
 2. She used her words to bless and to make a godly appeal
"When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.
I Samuel 25:30-31 (NIV)
- I. 3 questions to defuse marital conflict and change the conversation
1. **Are you happy?** Goal is to hear your husband's/wife's feelings and listen compassionately, not judge, criticize or shame
 2. **What do you see as our most important goal or challenge as a couple if we're going to improve our relationship?**
Listen well, reflect back content and feelings, without defensiveness or angry responses, even if hard to hear.
 3. **What kind of husband and father (or wife and mother) do you most desire to be?**
Listen compassionately, without challenging, arguing or reacting. Honest talk, patient listening, builds intimacy Adapted from The Emotionally Destructive Marriage by Leslie Vernick
- J. David's response to Abigail's wise words **I Sam. 25:32-38**
1. He recognized that God had sent her to restrain him
Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. I Samuel 25:32-33
 2. David learned that God desires patience and self-control
Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.
Proverbs 16:32 (NIV)
 3. David gave his desire for vengeance over to God to deal with
Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19
- IV. Responding to Angry People in Our Lives
- A. Angry people feel wronged; the most effective response is listening
 - B. Four step process for responding to any angry person

1. Acknowledge their anger and your intent to listen and understand
“I see you’re angry. Tell me what happened to upset you”
2. Listen attentively, reflecting back both content and feelings, so they know they’re heard and understood. Validate feeling.
“So it sounds like you were treated badly. That must have been very discouraging for you. Anyone would be upset.”
3. Resist the urge to defend, point out their faults, or “fix it”
Goal in de-escalating anger is empathy—help them feel heard and understood before attempting to explain, justify, or fix it
4. Ask what, if anything, you can do to help
If anger is justifiably directed at you, apologize, ask forgiveness, and if appropriate, explain your intentions. If not directed at you, ask if you can pray with/for the person or help in some other way.

C. When Godly assertiveness is appropriate in responding to anger

“I see that you are angry, but I can’t talk with you when you are shouting at me. When you have calmed down, I would be happy to discuss it and try to resolve the problem.”

“I deserve to be treated with respect in our relationship. When you (yell, swear at, call me names, etc.) I feel disrespected, unloved, anxious and angry. It hurts me and it damages our marriage. Please speak to me with courtesy and respect.” (Prepare consequences.)

Example of consequence for repeated verbal and physical abuse:

“Paul found the following note: ‘I love you too much to stay and let you hurt me and destroy your self-esteem. I know you cannot be happy about what happened last night. I will not return until your counselor

assures me that you have learned to handle your anger in a more responsible manner. Love, Natalie.”
From Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion, by Gary Chapman

I. Living Distinctively as Followers of Christ in an Angry World

A. Apostle Paul calls us to a higher standard of behavior in relationships

If then you have been raised with Christ...you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator...

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:1, 8-10, 12-14 (NIV)

B. Christlike behavior only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

Galatians 5:19-21

C. The Holy Spirit can empower us to live lives that reflect the character and behaviors of Jesus Christ in us

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, self-control; Galatians 5:22-23

Recommended Reading

The Emotionally Destructive Marriage – Leslie Vernick

Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion – Gary Chapman

Healing is a Choice – Steve Arterburn

How We Love – Milan and Kay Yerkovich

Lord, I Just Want to Be Happy – Leslie Vernick

How We Love Our Kids – Milan and Kay Yerkovich

Forgiving and Reconciling – Everett Worthington

Traumatized – Kati Morton

Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages – Shaunti Feldhahn

Losing It: A Christian Parent's Guide to Controlling Anger – Luke Gilkerson

Making Happy: The Art and Science of a Happy Marriage – Les & Leslie Parrott