

Overcoming Anger In Marriage!

Our greatest problem is anger! ***Anger in marriage is inevitable!*** It does not have to be the cold edge of fury, but even the healthiest couple will at times feel the cool tip of frustration at times. No other relationship in life has the same potential for anger -- possibly because we experience so many unmet expectations. Maybe we have not truly giving "*our rights*" to God and accepted His will and providential working in our lives.

Short-term anger is common, but letting hurt feelings drag into long-term resentments and bitterness can devastate a marriage -- may even be fatal. Many have allowed anger to eat away at their love, forgiveness, and commitment.

Anger has the power to break down relationships. *It can push us into other sins, and emotionally tie us into knots.* Our hostility, and unforgiveness will *tie us up into knots -- causing unrest, lack of sleep, depression, and much hardness of heart.* (Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:8-14; Col. 3:19; Heb. 12:12-17)

Couples who learn individually, and personally how to *control their spirit (attitude)* (Prov. 16:23; 28:25) will make great strides toward loving intimacy. We must learn how to deal with anger in a constructive way. Holding on to hurt feelings, and hostility, and building scorn and potential contempt is a sure way to bring a total break down of the marriage.

Couples who keep their spirit "open" to each other when dealing with anger make great strides towards intimacy and loving closeness.

A. Power struggles - - are the net result of unresolved anger!

1. Some marriages are made up of daily *power struggles!* Both work at having control, both practice "*one-upmanship,*" strife, conflict, competition becomes the norm of their existence. (Consider Philipians 2:1-4.)
2. Frequently one spouse or dating partner may go along with their loved one's every wish for a year or so -- but eventually things will change.
3. If unmet expectations and anger hasn't been adequately dealt with -- a battle for control in the relationship will often ensue.
4. Instead of each *yielding their rights* they begin using emotional *outbursts* to make a point and one or the other, or both try to control.

What does the Word of God teach us in:

a. Rom. 12:10 _____

b. Rom. 12:17 _____

c. I Jh. 4:16-18 _____

B. Power struggles -- are caused by certain factors:

1. **Issues are constantly raised** -- but never resolved.
 - a. If you are locked in a power struggle -- everything becomes an issue.
 - b. Little things are picked up as issues -- because behind it are all the hurts, hostilities, resentments, and feelings from previous disputes.
 - c. A wall has been built between the two that has never been removed.
 - d. Floating hostility and frustration becomes the norm -- with nothing ever resolved -- just anger that is attached to everything that happens.
2. If this continues, then, the problems pile up, they'll drop the issue, and **begin to attack the person.**
 - a. They do not clearly identify (or admit) the real issue or unresolved problem (s) -- for now they zero in on the other person's character.
 - b. The small skirmishes of the past now become character assassination time.
 - c. Illustration from story:
 - d. As the battle heats up -- they even attack one another over who needs to change.
 - e. They become locked into a power struggle of major proportions.

In power struggles, the battle can continue on over who's in charge, who is setting the family rules, and who is following them.

3. Finally, one or both **attack the relationship.**

Their thoughts may be... *"If these are the kind of issues we have, the kind of person I am dealing with... then what am I doing in their relationship? I may as well get out!"*

 - a. Now *security, trust, faith, love, and intimacy* are gone.
 - b. When the relationship gets to this stage -- everything jumps from level one (1) to level three (3) -- questioning the **relationship.**
 - c. Now even squeezing the tooth-paste tube the wrong way -- becomes grounds for divorce. (Because they question the relationship.)

Here is the "killing ground" of a marriage!

- ***Unresolved issues***
 - ***Attacking the person***
 - ***Questioning the relationship***
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C. Is there a way to break free from this killing cycle and deal with anger and resentment in a more constructive way? Can we change?

We will consider *three contributing factors* that help to create our problem. They are:

- A feeling of being *devalued and a blocking of our goals.*
 - An *inner guilt* from all the conflict and confrontation.
 - A *deep sense of rejection.*
1. When we think someone is **devaluing us or blocking our goals** -- it often sparks our anger. What is the Bible answer? (Psa. 37:23)

What does Romans 8:28-29 teach us? _____

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2. When we hurt others, God is trying to deal with us, and **inner guilt is the natural reaction** -- this often causes more inner stress, frustration, and anger in our personal lives. What are God's principles?
Prov. 28:13 _____

James 5:16 _____

Psa. 32:1-5 _____

3. When **we feel rejection** we will experience deep pain. What should we do about this? We can take it to the Lord and rest in what we are in Him.

Eph. 1:6 _____

Isa. 26:3 _____

I Pet. 2:20-24 _____

D. Our major cause of disharmony -- is a "closed spirit!"

Even unknowingly, we can hurt others by what we say, do, or how we react. This can result in their "closing their spirit." Likewise, people can offend us by their hurtful actions, reactions, or words. Often the result is hardness of heart, indifference, and a closed spirit.

1. The "spirit" is the innermost, intangible part of our being.
2. It is that part of us that touches another without words, or without any physical touching taking place. (Read and consider I Corinthians 2:9-11.)
3. A closed spirit is a closed attitude in which the person withdraws from others. *This becomes a form of rejection.*
4. The Greek word for mind is **psyche**. This represents a person's intellect, will, and emotions. It's where we communicate to ourselves (self-talk) feel, and make decisions regarding relationships.
5. *We are body, soul, and spirit* and any part can and does affect the other. When we have a closed spirit it will be evident in each part.

E. We need to maintain an open spirit.

1. An open spirit represents a person who is relatively free from anger, quickly forgives, and desires to be mutually transparent.
2. This is a person who desires to communicate, and who stays open to the other person's ideas.
3. This person does not withdraw, stone-wall, or react in negative ways.

There are serious results from a closed spirit: How do we close someone's spirit?

1. Criticizing someone unjustly
2. Taking someone for granted as a normal practice
3. Dismissing someone's needs as unimportant
4. Speaking harsh words to someone
5. Making jokes about someone's character, or physical flaws

6. Making sarcastic statements
 7. Being rude to someone in front of others
 8. Being unwilling to admit when we are wrong -- especially when we really are
 9. Telling someone or implying his or her opinions don't matter!
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F. A closed spirit is often reflected in one or more ways, such as:

1. an argumentative spirit,
2. a very critical spirit,
3. a resistance to discuss or agree on almost anything,
4. withdraw, or stonewalling with the intent of not working on anything with the other person (s),
5. disrespect and an unwillingness to receive advice,
6. a determination to not accept or give romantic overtures.

List ways you have sensed people *closing their spirit to you, or how you have responded to others.*

G. A closed spirit is often sensed in physical ways, such as:

1. Their facial expressions begin to reflect anger or avoidance.
 2. They obviously won't look at the other person.
 3. They often turn their back away from us.
 4. If you try to hug them -- they turn away, or stand like a post, or shrug their shoulders in indifference.
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In this too there is a difference between men and women!

Women tend to be more sensitive and aware of the damage a relationship suffers from a closed spirit. A woman's needs for a close, meaningful relationship is often greater than a man's, so the wife will be more sensitive to words and actions that weaken relationships. Children also are deeply hurt from a parent's closed spirit.

What are God's Answers?

1. Gal. 5:15 _____
 2. Gal. 5:22-23 _____
 3. I Cor. 13:4-8 _____
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H. Consider six keys that will help open a person's spirit:

These are not six steps, but have to do with our personal attitude and the value we place on the other person. (If the person does not open their spirit right away -- get softer, increase your understanding, gentleness, and be carefully persistent.)

1. Manifesting gentleness, tenderness -- Eph. 4:32; I Pet. 3:8; Col. 3:12
2. Understanding what the other person has gone through -- Rom. 12:10
3. Listening carefully, with compassion, empathy, purposefully -- James 1:19

4. Acknowledge when the other person is hurting and admit when you have been offensive. Luke 17:1-4
5. Touch the other person gently.
6. Ask for forgiveness and quickly give forgiveness -- Eph. 4:26-27; Col. 3:13

Personal application:

Project: Take a minor conflict from recent months -- find out how serious the conflict was -- ask the person who was offended to rate the severity of the problem.

0 _____ 10
 no problem minor problem major offense
Work through the problem using the keys above.

Take a more sensitive problem and work through it. Set as your goal to both open your spirits as much as possible. Begin with expressions of a tender repentant attitude:

“Honey, I love you, and I am committed to you for life.”
“I don’t want to continue to offend you, and I know you don’t want us to continue like this!”
“Do you think I really understand how you are hurting?”

Project:

What verses do you need to apply to your life? (List below)

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

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