

Helping Women Who Struggle With Anger

I. Introduction

- A. When you *feel frustrated or irritated*, you are angry – even if you don't say or do anything outwardly – you are angry in your heart.
- B. In the book of 1 Peter it says that a “woman who is precious in God's sight is a woman with a gentle and quiet spirit.”
- C. It is confusing what a “gentle and quiet spirit” really means.
- D. Gentle and Quiet spirit – a woman who does not contend with or dispute with God.
- *She accepts God's dealings with her as good.*
 - *She is not given to fear or anger.*
- E. Our topic today is anger.

II. Linda's Story

A. Linda's Story

Linda is a young wife and mother who came to me for help because of her anger problem. She professes to be a Christian; and Linda and her husband and children are active in church. Linda works part time tutoring and they have a nice home and no money problems. Outwardly they looked like a very happy family. Unfortunately, they were not because no one ever knows when Linda's anger would burst forth. When it did, it was really bad. It was as if a big, black cloud had descended over them all. Her anger was, often, unpredictable as it would flare at the most unexpected times – usually aimed at her husband or children. People at church had not seen that side of her character. Both she and her husband were discouraged at her lack of progress. She needed hope, needed to be taught what the Scriptures said about anger, needed to learn how to apply, in very practical ways, what she was learning, and she needed accountability.

B. I gave Linda hope by:

- Encouraging her with my commitment to help her.
- My own testimony and how God helped me.
- Lots of Scriptures on hope: 1 Cor. 10:13; Ro.8:28-29

- III. I Taught Linda What the Bible teaches about anger.
- A. There are all kinds of expressions of anger ranging from a mild irritation to a hatred/rage/ murder in your heart. It is expressed as a slight irritation/ impatience to the greatest out of control rage. It doesn't take very long being around someone who is an angry person to observe their anger. Their anger hurts others worse than they think it does. Angry people are not merciful or compassionate so they do not really empathize with others who struggle with having been hurt over their angry outburst. Anger is a "deed of the flesh" (Gals. 5:20). It is a "lack of love" (1 Cor. 13:5). It "does not achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). It "provokes children to anger" (Eph. 6:4). It is one characteristic of a fool (Eccl. 7:9).
 - B. Sinful anger is different than righteous anger. Someone who is righteously angry is, at the same time, loving God and loving others. They are still under the control of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:26-27). Their words are wholesome and they speak the truth in love (Eph.4:15,29). They confront a sinning person or family member with a righteous heart's motive -- to restore the other person to a right relationship with others and with God (Gals. 6:1).
 - C. Three Biblical examples: Saul, Cain, the Pharisees.
 - 1. Gen.4:5 – Cain murdered Abel
 - 2. 1 Sam.18:6-9 -- Saul angry at David
 - 3. John 11:53 -- After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Pharisees hated him so much, in their anger, they plotted to kill Him.
- IV. I Counseled Linda using the guidelines in 2 Tim3:16-17
- A. Doctrine/Teaching -- teach biblical principles [Recommended further reading – *Anger and Stress Management God's Way* by Wayne Mack, P&R, 2017.]
 - 1. The Lord has righteous anger. Joel 2:13; Rev14:9-10
 - 2. Man can have righteous anger. James1:19; Eph.4:26
 - 3. Man's anger does not achieve God's righteous ends. James 1:20
 - 4. Man is to be slow to anger. James 1:19
 - 5. Man is to lay aside anger and wrath. Cols. 3:8
 - 6. Parents are not to provoke their children to anger. Eph. 6:4
 - 7. Man is to put away wrath and anger and put on kindness, a tender-hearted, and forgiveness. Eph 4:31-32
 - 8. Angry outbursts are a deed of the flesh. Gal 5:20
 - 9. There is a biblical contrast between the man who "stirs up anger" and the man who "subdues anger." Pro. 15:1
 - 10. The expression of anger is the heart-sin of murder. Matt.5:21-22
 - 11. Anger and cruelty are associated. Pro.27:4; Eph.4:31
 - 12. A fool always loses his temper. Pro. 29:11; Ecc.7:9
 - 13. An angry person doesn't stop being an angry person until they start, by God's grace, being kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving. Eph. 4:22-24; 4:31-32.

D. Reproof

-- I had Linda keep an anger journal. Write down what she is thinking and what the circumstances were each time she *felt* frustrated, irritated, or resentful. [This journal is not pages of how she felt, but a simple list of what she was thinking when she felt frustrated, irritated, resentful.

---I would tell her what she is doing wrong by giving clear, specific examples.

C. Correction

-- give examples of how to correct her angry thoughts and responses.

-- Communication Pie: correct words, tone of voice, and countenance.

Pro. 15:28; Pro. 15:1; Pro. 25:23; Gals.5:23; Rom 2:4

-- have her memorize many Scriptures and for her to be able to say them readily: 1 Cor. 13:4-7; James 1:19-20; 1 Thes.5:18

Anger Producing Thoughts	Kind, Tender-Heart, Forgiving Thoughts
I told that child to come here ten times and he did not obey.	I want him to obey. I will tell him once and then spank him. Eph.6:4
He's so slow with his homework, I can't take it any longer. I have other things to do.	"Love is patient." I can show love to my child and patiently help him. 1 Cor. 13:4
There's a wreck, I'll never make it on time.	Whether I make it on time or not, thank you Lord for Providentially hindering me. 1 Thes.5:18
How dare he "snap" at me when he walks in the door from work?	"Love is kind and not provoked." I can show love to him whether he is showing love to me or not. I wonder if he's had a bad day or has a headache? 1 Cor. 13:4-5
He won't even listen to me when I try to explain to him about the Lord. He's rude. This makes me mad!	"The Lord's bondservant is first of all gentle." I will try again later. I know he is spiritually blind. 2 Tim. 2:24-26
If I have to get up with that child one more time, I'll scream!	I can get up and care for her whether I feel like it or not. "Love does not insist on its own way." And "Love endures all things." 1 Cor. 13:5,7

<p>The women's committee at church does not like my idea. They are not going to do it my way! That makes me mad!</p>	<p>It's OK if they don't agree with me. I need to "count [them] as more significant than [myself]." Phil.2:3 That makes me so mad! I need to be "quick to hear" because I might have misunderstood. James 1:19</p>
<p>Leave me alone!</p>	<p>"Love is patient." I <i>can</i> show love to him by patiently listening to his request. 1 Corinthians 13:4</p>
<p>How stupid can he be?</p>	<p>What he did was wrong. Lord, help me to think of practical ways to "overcome evil with good." Ro.12:21</p>
<p>He doesn't care about me. He only thinks of himself.</p>	<p>He does not know the Lord, therefore, he has no capacity to love me as he should. However, I will appeal to his conscience to do what is right so I will tell him that what he is doing <i>is</i> selfish. Even though he is not a Christian, I will show love to him [whether he perceives it that way or not] as "love rejoices not with wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth." 1 Cor. 13:6</p>

D. Training in Righteousness

E.

-- *gymnazo* means doing it over and over again until you get it right.1
 Tim.4:7,8.

-- Emergency trigger thoughts: a short, simple list of thoughts and Scriptures to quickly review to yourself when you begin to start feeling irritated or frustrated. They have to be practiced over and over again.

Example:

"Love is patient. I *can* show love to him by waiting."
 [based on 1 Cor. 13:4]

"Thank you Lord for this test." [based on 1 Pet. 1:7-8]

"Help me to achieve Your righteous ends."
 [based on James 1:19-20]

“Thank You Lord for reminding me how much I need You.” [based on Hebs. 4:16].

-- keep short accounts of your sin with God and with man.

1 John 1:9; Matt.5:23,24

-- I had Linda ask her husband to hold her accountable. When she began to get harsh in her tone and aggravated, he was to calmly ask her to go to another room and pray and think about what she wanted to say and how she wanted to say it. I explained to Linda that “God would give her grace if she would humble herself and do what her husband asked.”

-- The next week, I asked her how the week had gone. She said, “I got sent to my room twice! But I went and the Lord helped me.” 1 Peter 5:5

V. In the End, How did Linda do?

A. Because Linda truly did love the Lord and wanted to please Him, she worked hard at Scripture memory and mind renewal by thinking kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving thoughts. By God's grace she took to heart the command to “train [her]self for godliness”(1 Timothy 4:7, adaptation added). She became aware when she *felt* irritated or frustrated or resentful that whatever she was thinking at the time was causing her anger. No longer could Linda blame others or her circumstances. Because she was more aware of her sin, she quickly confessed it to the Lord, and if she had outwardly responded angrily to someone else, she asked their forgiveness, too. At first she had to ask forgiveness quite a lot! It was not the circumstances that made her angry but what she was telling herself about them.

B. She learned that “God gives grace to the humble” but “opposes the proud” (1 Peter 5:5). So, she humbled herself before God and asked her husband and children to tell her when she sounded the least bit harsh or mean. She sincerely thanked God when one of them pointed out her anger, and she thanked her family for loving her enough to speak the truth to her. At first, she struggled with great frustration and embarrassment when her family told her what she did wrong. But she knew that God loved her and therefore disciplined her “for [her] good, that [she] may share his holiness” (Hebrews 12:10, adaptation added). She also knew that the “wounds of a friend are faithful.” Pro.27:6 Knowing that helped her to be thankful for her family's reproofs.

C. Finally, Linda worked diligently to renew her mind. At the beginning it was very easy for her to slip back into thinking the same old sinful thoughts, and it was very difficult to think new kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving thoughts. However, the more humble she was and the more diligent she was, the more grace God poured out on her. The day came when, like me at the beginning of this chapter, Linda realized that her first thought was the God-honoring, grateful, loving the other person thought. She, like me, became delighted in how God was supernaturally working in her heart, the fruit of the Spirit. Gals.5

D. Does Linda (or Martha for that matter) ever become sinfully angry now? Yes, but the Lord has changed us both so much that it is rare and of much less intensity. Both of us, with God's help, simply remember to “confess [our] sins, [knowing and believing] he is faithful and just to forgive

[us] and to cleanse [us] from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God faithfully, wondrously, and providentially continues to work in our hearts for our good and his glory. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:12-14)