

# Handling Anger in Your Home

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**Sterling UMC**  
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**Genesis 4:1-12**

Skit: Hidden Anger – Perform by Tom and Margie Lazo

This morning I want to talk with you about a very serious subject. Anger. If we are going to build strong families one of the most serious threats that we need to face is anger.

In any human relationship conflict is inevitable. It may or may not be as serious as the skit we just witnessed, but it will come. You're going to have conflict because we are all imperfect and sinful human beings. We can be selfish. We can be prideful. We can be mean. We can be hurtful. We can be inconsiderate. We can be impatient. All of these things can lead to conflict and anger. Conflict in your home is inevitable but combat is not. You must learn how to disagree without being disagreeable. You've got to learn how to argue without assassinating. In every relationship, when you have a conflict, you will either have a breakdown or a breakthrough. The relationship will either be damaged or destroyed and there will be a breakdown. Or there will be a breakthrough to a new level of maturity and intimacy and fellowship. The key is how you handle your anger.

The Bible says in Proverbs 11:29 (LB) that mishandled anger can cause enormous damage in relationships. *"The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing left."* More marriages and more families are destroyed by anger than anything else.

This problem is as old as humanity. All the way back in the beginning we see anger rear its ugly head in the story of Cain and Abel. We see how when allowed to fester and go unchecked anger can lead to some very serious and harmful consequences.

When it comes to dealing with conflict everybody in this room today basically falls into one of two camps. You either tend to be a passive person or you tend to be an aggressive person. You have a tendency to either fight or you have a tendency to flee when conflict happens. I like how one author puts it he says, "When God puts couples together He puts skunks and turtles in the same family."

Some of you are skunks. With a skunk you know exactly where they stand. They let you know. And when they're upset they don't mind stinking up the whole place. They spew. Everybody knows how they feel.

On the other hand, some of you are turtles. When conflict comes you pull back into your shell. You withdraw. You become distant. You back out of the relationship.

And both of these approaches are wrong. Is there any alternative? Yes there is. At every point in your life, you are always moving in one of three directions. You're always

moving against people in anger, away from people in fear, or you are moving with people in love. There are only three ways to move in life. The idea in anger control is not to eliminate anger because you can't, but learn how to express anger in appropriate ways, in ways that benefit you and benefit the other person.

Today what we're going to talk about is a very, very important skill. It is absolutely essential for a healthy marriage. It is absolutely essential for a strong family -- learning how to handle anger.

What does the Bible say about how to handle your anger?

## **WHAT DO I DO WHEN I'M ANGRY?**

### **1. I MUST ADMIT MY ANGER.**

I need to stop denying it, stop pretending it's not there. When I'm angry I just need to say, "I'm angry." Ephesians 4:25-26 (LB), *"Stop lying to each other; tell the truth. When we lie to each other we are hurting ourselves. If you are angry, don't sin by nursing your grudge."*

There's a right way to get angry and there's a wrong way. There's an appropriate way and an inappropriate way. There is a constructive way to get angry and there is a destructive way to get angry. Anger is not sin. God gets angry. 375 times in the Old Testament it says God got angry. Jesus got angry. It is not a sin to get angry. In fact, if you never get angry in a relationship it means you're not in touch with reality. It's not how you get angry it's what you do with your anger that makes it a sin or not. He says learn to get angry without sinning.

The starting point is to admit my anger. I can't work on it until I admit it. The issue is not how to eliminate anger from your life but how to express it appropriately.

In order to do that, you have to understand your anger.

### **2. I MUST UNDERSTAND MY ANGER.**

Proverbs 14:39 (NIV), *"A patient man has great understanding but a quick tempered man displays his folly."* The point of this is to begin to look at yourself and ask questions like, "Why am I angry? Why does this situation upset me so much?" When you begin to understand what it is that's going on in your heart, God can work on you and you can begin to resolve some things.

Anger is a warning light in our lives that lets us know that there's something very deep that's causing us to be upset. We get irritated over inconsequential things. But when you get really angry that's a clue to you that you need to stop and ask yourself, Why? and What's so upsetting in this? Because it's touching a life deep issue in your heart.

Experts have discovered that there are about five basic root causes for the anger that we feel in relationships. This also helps you be understanding.

1. We get angry when we feel unaccepted. When someone in the family feels rejected for who or what we are, when we feel like we're compared to other people, when people in our family maybe make fun of us or criticize us, we get angry.
2. We get angry when we feel unappreciated. When other people in our family take us for granted. When they don't value our effort or notice the work that we've done. When we feel like everything else is more important to them than we are, we get angry.
3. We get angry when we feel unsupported. When we feel like the people in our family are working against us instead of with us, when they don't share their load of responsibilities that makes us really angry.
4. We get angry when we feel unprotected, when the situations in our lives seems out of control we feel like other people don't care about our needs, when we feel vulnerable, that makes us feel unprotected and we usually get angry.
5. We get angry when we feel uncertain. If we don't feel like we can trust each other or we don't know that the other people in our family are telling us the truth, that makes us angry.

The bottom line for these things, the root causes of most of the things we get angry about are either hurt, frustration or fear. That's usually beneath every kind of angry situation that comes up. But understanding these things can help us begin to take the next step.

### **3. THE THIRD STEP IS TO DEAL IMMEDIATELY WITH ANGER.**

Don't procrastinate dealing with it. Don't put it off. Don't delay it. Ephesians 4:26-27 (JB), *"Never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold."* We are supposed to resolve each day's anger as it comes. What happens all too often is people are absolutely unwilling to put the time into the resolution stage. We express our anger, we let it out, but then we are not willing to stay at the table until issues are talked about until real feelings are allowed to be expressed and dealt with and solutions begun to be hammered out. It takes time and I'd be willing to bet that many of you are not willing to put that kind of time in. The Bible says Don't go to bed with unresolved anger. Why? Job 18:4(GN) says, *"You are only hurting yourself with your anger."*

How many of you notice the physiological changes that happen when you get angry? Adrenalin starts coursing through our bodies, more sugar is released, your heart begins to beat faster, your blood pressure rises, the pupils of your eyes dilate and widen, your hands begin to tremble, you literally get hot under the collar. If you allow yourself to stay in this state for very long it's destructive to your physical body. The Bible was so wise when it tells us to deal with each day's anger as it comes.

Unresolved conflict keeps growing. And unexpressed anger becomes bitterness and often turns from that into hate and hostility. It doesn't have to be that way.

### **4. THE BIBLE SAYS WE NEED TO LEARN TO CONTROL OUR ANGER.**

Proverbs 29:11 (LB), *"A fool gives full vent to his anger but a wise man keeps himself under control."* A mark of wisdom is the ability to control your anger. If you have a hot temper that you can't control, that means you need to learn wisdom. Wisdom is shown in the ability to control your anger.

How do you do that? The Bible gives us four very practical ways to control our anger.

1. I must realize the cost.

Proverbs 29:22 (LB), *"A hot tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble."* Have you had your anger get you into all kinds of trouble? *"People with hot tempers do foolish things."* (Proverbs 14:17 GN) Anybody want to give a testimony?

The Bible says realize the cost before you lose that cool. Realize what you're losing. Remember the verse I quoted earlier, *"The fool that provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing left."* More families are destroyed from anger than anything else. Realize the cost.

2. Reflect before reacting.

Stop and think before you speak. Put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in gear. James says this, (James 1:19 NIV) *"Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."* There are three things to do in that verse. If you do the first two, the third one is automatic. If you're quick to listen, and you are slow to speak, you will be slow to get angry. The problem is, we jump the gun. We jump to conclusions. We're in a hurry and we just let it out. We say things that we later regret. The Bible says reflect before reacting. Think about what you're going to say before you get into trouble. Think before you speak.

3. Release my anger appropriately.

I need to learn how to release my anger appropriately. Ephesians 4:29 (GN) is a very important verse. *"Do not use harmful words in talking. Use only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed."* Use words that build up not tear down. Be helpful, not harmful. Find constructive ways to channel your anger. It's all in how you say it and what you say in whether it's going to be appropriate or inappropriate

The problem is when we use that very powerful emotion in the wrong way. Then it becomes dangerous. Have you ever noticed the difference between "anger" and "danger" -- it's just the letter "d" in the front. Anger expressed inappropriately is dangerous. Anger expressed inappropriately can completely destroy lives, can destroy jobs, can destroy relationships.

4. I must rely on Christ's help.

Romans 15:5 (LB), *"May God who gives patience help you to live in complete harmony with each other, each with the attitude of Christ toward the others."* It says if you want to live in complete harmony in your relationships have the attitude of Christ -- each of you. Each of you must put Christ into your life and have His attitude.

How does Jesus Christ help me heal my anger? He deals with the root causes. He heals the hurts. He relieves the frustrations. He salves the fears in life. When Jesus fills you with His love it pushes everything else out. I have discovered that when I am filled with anger, almost anything will tick me off. When I'm filled with anger I can get upset about anything. When I'm filled with the love of Christ, almost nothing irritates me. It just doesn't bother me. I have an ability to handle things because I'm filled with love.

When the world puts pressure on you whatever is inside of you is what's going to come out. It's like toothpaste. You squeeze that toothpaste tube, whatever is inside of it is going to come out. When you're filled with anger and the world puts pressure on you, anger is going to come out. But if you're filled with the love of Jesus Christ, when the world puts pressure on you, what's going to come out is Jesus Christ and His love.

Have you ever considered this, part of the reason for your anger is that you are expecting other people to meet needs that God wants to meet in your life. You're looking to other people to fill a hole, an emptiness that only God can fill anyway. When they can't fill it, and they can't meet all your needs, you're mad at them. There is no person in the world that was ever meant to meet all your needs. Because every human being is imperfect. There are some needs in your life that only Jesus Christ can meet.

If the truth were known there are many of you here today that are struggling with conflict and struggling with the pain of conflict. Some of you have been feeling unaccepted. Jesus Christ accepts you and loves you. Some of you feel unappreciated. Jesus Christ knows your value. Maybe you feel unsupported. The Bible says, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Some of you feel unprotected. The Bible says, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you."* Some of you maybe feel uncertain. Jesus says, *"Come to Me if you're weary and tired and I will give you rest."* I want you to pray one simple prayer this morning. Say, "Jesus Christ, replace my anger with Your love. Help me to treat people the way You would. Help me to have the attitude of Christ." If you've never opened your life to Christ, do so this morning and invite Him to come into your life and He will and begin to make the changes that you want and that He wants to make in your life.

Thank You, Father, that Your love is greater than any other problem -- fear or anger. Thank You, that when we're filled with Your love, it changes us. We pray this in Your name. Amen.