

## Freedom From Anger - Women

### The Problem

As women who struggle with anger, we may not recognize that our anger has foundations in other basic emotions—usually fear or pain. These basic emotions may have become damaged as adults or when we were children. Some of us may have been abused or neglected as children. Others may have lost a parent or a loved one by their death. Many of us may have been abused or cheated on by a spouse or boyfriend.

We may have learned how to express anger inappropriately from our parents, other relatives, or friends. We did not realize that when we lashed out in anger, we were ignoring our fear, pain, or another deeper hurt, habit or hang-up. Others of us did not even realize we were struggling with anger because we did not express it, but rather, we stuffed it down and kept silent.

As our lives and relationships progressed we may have become addicted to the physical symptoms of anger. Some of us may have felt a momentary euphoria as the anger was released. Some of us did not recognize we were actually hurting our loved ones and ourselves in the process. In the heat of the moment, releasing our anger was all that mattered.

Some of us felt our anger was justified based on the object of anger's actions, i.e., "If he hadn't come home late from work, I wouldn't have had to yell at him" or "If she had not talked back to me, I would not have had to slap her" or "My husband deserves me calling him names, yelling and fighting because he cheated on me."

Many of us feel intense shame and guilt over the actions that we have committed during our unhealthy expressions of anger. We have vowed to never act that way again, only to find ourselves back in the same situations, unable to change it under our own power. Anger has confused us and gotten the better of us time and time again.

Some of us did not understand that anger is a God given emotion and that we could use it in healthy, productive ways. Being angry meant that we were bad, somehow faulty; even that we were not Christians. We have allowed our shame and guilt to create the false belief that we could not turn

to God for his comfort, strength and guidance. We did not feel worthy of His help or love. We remained stuck in using anger as a coping mechanism and to get the desired results from others.

### The Solution

**EVALUATE THE ANGER:** Anger is one of my ten basic, God-given emotions. This emotion can be CONSTRUCTIVE or DESTRUCTIVE—depending upon my response. The focus of this group is on giving Jesus a "NANO SECOND" (just one billionth of a second!), to help me use all of my emotions according to God's design, for my life, and to appropriately change my pattern of relating to my responsibilities and to other people. It is both healthy and necessary to feel anger and to talk about my anger. I should recognize anger as my own emotion and avoid hurting the objects of my anger—keeping my anger as a feeling not an action. Looking at anger as a feeling may also reveal a larger hurt, habit or hang up that is hiding behind the anger. It is what I do with my feelings that will allow me to fall into sin. I need to check the motives for my behavior. Rudeness under the disguise of being honest is still rudeness.

There are two kinds of anger: *healthy adaptive anger* and *unhealthy needless anger*. Healthy anger is based on being protective of myself or others. Unhealthy needless anger is based on my resentment which leads to desiring revenge. Recognizing and accepting my responsibility for unhealthy needless anger is the first step towards true freedom from anger.

**DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD:** Anger causes me to live in conflict and not in peace. I will try to remember that God is in charge of my life and He loves me unconditionally. I will commit to having a daily quiet time with God.

**TAKING A "TIME-OUT":** When I feel body arousal, I need to recognize that as a sign that I am getting angry. I will use a "time-out" to isolate myself from the trigger for my anger and to prevent the anger from becoming too intense. I will ask myself, "What is making me angry? And "How is this trigger about me?" I will reappraise the situation to keep my behavior under control. I will do something physical to release the adrenaline rush and energy in a healthy way, such as going for a walk or cleaning a closet. I will avoid alcohol, caffeine, or other medicating substances during "time-out." Looking at anger as a feeling may also reveal a larger hurt, habit or hang up that is hiding behind the anger.

**CONFRONTING IN LOVE:** After the time-out, I will go back and deal with what made me angry. If I leave an issue unresolved, it is likely to return later. I will not use the confrontation as an opportunity to blame, shame, seek revenge, or to rationalize my anger. Examples of confronting in love while stating my feelings are: “*I love you, here’s how this action makes me feel,*” or “*I feel devalued when this is said or done.*”

**WORK THE 12 STEPS AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS:** I will commit to working the 12 Steps, to attend regularly the Celebrate Recovery meetings, and to getting an Accountability Partner for my anger management. (We strongly suggest each woman obtain a Life Recovery Bible and the Participant’s Guides, which are the tools we use in Celebrate Recovery.)

**FORGIVE:** I will become willing to forgive myself and others. *The Lord forgave you, so you must be willing to forgive others* (Colossians 3:13b NLT). Forgiveness is NOT forgetting what has happened. Forgiveness *IS* changing the way I think. Forgiveness *IS* my giving up my desire for revenge.

**SELF CONTROL:** Self-control is a mark of spiritual maturity, while giving in to outward anger (raging), or giving the silent treatment (stuffing), denotes the exact opposite. I will ask myself before I speak:

- Is it true?
- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?

## **My Emotions are My Own Choice**

I can choose:

- To be positive in my communication.
- To not withhold approval, acceptance, or affection.
- To not withhold my presence.
- To choose equality, rather than seeking false superiority feelings or false inferiority feelings.

When the trials come, I can be assured that if God has allowed them through His love, they are designed to produce good in me. As I continue to work through my anger, I will be patient with myself, living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time. I will try not to allow guilt or

discouragement to drag me lower than my anger does. God, who is the essence of patience, is very willing to take the necessary time to see me through my struggle.