



# Abundant Living Ministries

*Encouraging Christian Living since 1978*

March 2022

## When “ME FIRST” is a good thing!

It happens quite often. Sharon and I meet with a couple. After some get-acquainted small talk, we ask how we might be of help to them. The husband starts explaining, hesitantly at first, that they are facing some serious challenges. He then gets more emphatic and his voice sounds angry and harsh as he tells us that their marriage is sure not turning out the way he had expected. His wife just doesn't seem to care about his needs. Bottom line... his wife is shortchanging him! And he's had enough. He's fed up. **It's time for his wife to make some changes!**

We turn toward the wife and ask for her perspective. My, oh my... it's as though she's reading the same script that her husband just used. She feels shortchanged by her husband and so wishes he would change his ways. She has been so deeply hurt so often and for so long that she now feels numb about their marriage. **It's time for her husband to make some changes!**

Sharon and I realize they are BOTH saying the same thing (not in these precise words, mind you)... “It's time for my spouse to make some changes! I know I'm not perfect and have never claimed to be. BUT, if you put everything on a scale, I've contributed and invested more into our marriage than my spouse has. Therefore, they owe me! It's their move! Yes, I'm willing to do my part IF my partner first shows good faith by taking the FIRST step.”

This couple may return two weeks later, reporting that the situation at home is “same old, same old... nothing has changed.” Interesting - They both recognize their problems. In fact, they both know what they could do to improve and resolve the situation. BUT, they are both waiting for the other to make the FIRST MOVE!

This is where “Me FIRST” would be so helpful. I imagine that God is saying to BOTH the husband and wife, “YOU be FIRST. YOU take the first step. YOU take the initiative in showing kindness and love!”

We think the biggest reason for this foot-dragging resistance is often the fear that, “If I take the first step, and my spouse does not reciprocate with an equal step, then I will, once again, be taken advantage of. And, I am so tired of feeling hurt! I can't... I WILL NOT make myself vulnerable in this way, just to be stepped on again!”

And along comes Jesus, with His tender and wise instruction. He gently reminds us, “It is more blessed to give than receive.” (Acts 20:35) “If you only love those who love you, what credit is that to you? And if you only do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.” (Luke 6:32-33) “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

May we, in fact, be taken advantage of... yet again? Well, that could happen. But, whether the spouse does or does not respond in love, WE ARE BLESSED By God Himself as we obediently, in faith, take the risk to reach out in love!

Let's be first!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

# Breaking the Anger Habit

## QUESTION:

I hate to admit it, but I really struggle with a hot temper. My family often takes the brunt of my angry outbursts. Any suggestions that could help me keep myself under control would be much appreciated!

## RESPONSE:

I once read that, “about the time a man gets his temper under control he goes out and plays golf again!” Kidding aside, a hot temper is a serious problem for many men, women, and children. Hurtful words or actions hurled in a fit of rage are often remembered for years. Anger has destroyed many marriages, family relationships, and friendships.

Scripture tells us that fits of rage belong to our old sinful nature (see Galatians 5:19-21). Committing your life to Jesus Christ is the first step in getting permanent help with anger problems. So, begin by examining your spiritual life. Are you truly a follower of Jesus? If not, you can make that choice today! It’s the most important decision you will ever make and absolutely imperative, if you’re ever going to break your anger habit, or any other bad habit for that matter.

Even sincere Christians may struggle from time to time with flare-ups of temper. This is the battle that Paul talks about in Romans 5-7. Every day we have opportunity to give expression to our old sinful human nature, or to allow God to dictate how we think and act. This requires our cooperation, and it is where many people fail. They are not willing to put forth the effort needed to conquer the anger. They expect that God should supernaturally eradicate their hot temper. Once in a while He does this, but more often than not, He expects the individual to cooperate with Him, in making the changes.

Like most bad habits, conquering anger involves a combination of *new attitudes* and *new actions*.

You may wish to actually write a list of the damaging results that your anger has produced. Is this what you want to leave as your legacy? When you get disgusted enough, and desperate enough, you may finally do what it takes to get control of your anger. Until then, you probably enjoy the power anger gives you over people. Until you purposefully choose to give that up, you’re unlikely to change.

Once you decide you really mean business, start *memorizing* the following Scriptures about the wisdom of exercising restraint and the power that Jesus can give you...



- ◆ Proverbs 14:29 - A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly.
- ◆ Proverbs 12:16 - A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.
- ◆ 1 Cor. 13:4-5 - Love is patient, love is kind. It is not easily angered.
- ◆ Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- ◆ Proverbs 15:18 - A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.
- ◆ Mathew 5:44 - Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- ◆ Philippians 4:13 - I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

Actions are preceded by thoughts. Therefore, if you want to change your *actions*, you will choose to first modify how you *think*. When you feel the churning of anger inside, analyze your thinking. At whom or what are you mad? Why? What did they do that you don't appreciate? Are you feeling taken advantage of, disrespected, neglected, misunderstood, etc.? Once you've identified these thoughts, ask yourself, "what does God have to say about this?" God's wisdom through scripture is a powerful and always-helpful tool. Check out 1 Peter 4:8, 1 Peter 2:23, Romans 12:19, Ephesians 4:26.

**Now... Are you ready for some additional practical action steps?**

Analyze carefully what you look like and sound like when you give vent to your anger. Could you actually write a list of these observations? When anger begins to churn, perhaps the volume of your speech increases, or your hands start waving around, you point your finger, your face becomes hard-looking and stern. Or, if you are a passive personality, perhaps you clam up, roll your eyes, cross your arms, put distance between yourself and the other person, or even walk out on the conversation. You might even nod your head as though in agreement... all without really hearing what the other person is saying. These responses are evidences of the *sinful human nature*. You are possibly responding the way you have for years, perhaps ever since your childhood.

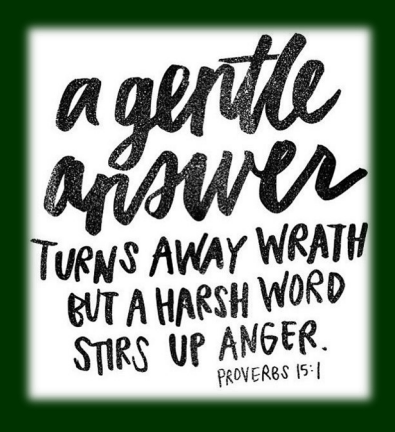


Harmful, sinful habits are best *replaced* by Godly ones. In order to do that, you need to have a mental picture of what that new response will be. Ask yourself, "When I get so upset with someone, is my typical response an expression of God's Holy Spirit in control of me? Or, is it an expression of my old human nature?" That's usually a pretty easy question to answer. When we blow up, or clam up, we are doing what comes naturally, not SUPER-naturally!

Since Scripture tells us that man's ways and God's ways are opposite (Galatians 5:17), it makes sense that learning to respond counter to our old patterns will require practicing a brand new *opposite* pattern, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**So... we "picture" our new Holy Spirit-empowered response:**

Raising my voice	<i>changes to</i>	speaking more quietly.
Waving my arms	<i>changes to</i>	keeping my arms by my side.
Pointing my finger in their face	<i>changes to</i>	relaxing my hands with open palms.
Rolling my eyes	<i>changes to</i>	focusing on their face and eyes.
Crossing my arms	<i>changes to</i>	keeping my arms uncrossed.
Putting distance between us	<i>changes to</i>	leaning in, paying attention.
Walking out of the room	<i>changes to</i>	remaining near the other person.
Refusing to speak	<i>changes to</i>	staying engaged in the conversation.
Frowning and looking furious	<i>changes to</i>	softening my face... even smiling.



Once you have identified what your new response will look and sound like, begin to picture yourself exhibiting these new behaviors. Ask the Lord to alert you the next time the first twinges of anger begin to bubble inside of you. Request His powerful help to respond in the new manner *opposite* your old, harmful habit.

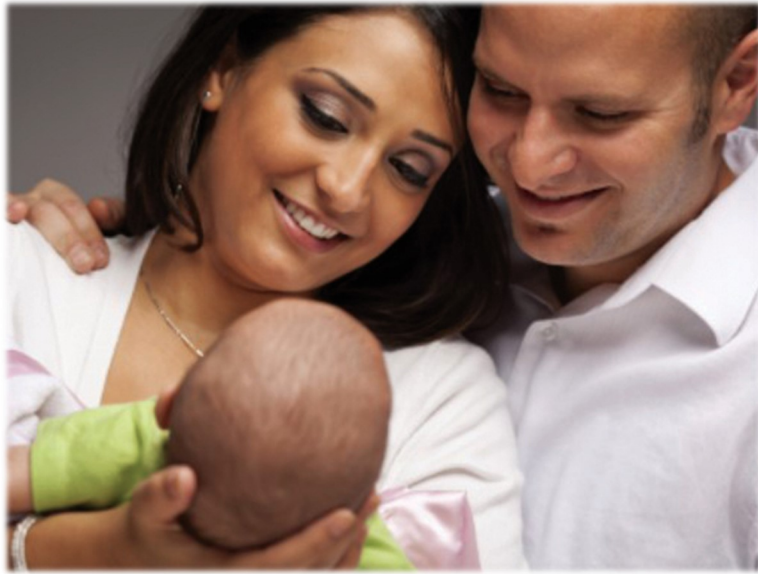
When anger drives us to God for His help, it serves a good purpose. Conversely, when we allow it to take control and produce fits of rage, it becomes a very damaging emotion. As you have already discovered, it hurts you and those on the receiving end of your fury.

Be encouraged. The emotion of anger alerts you that an inner struggle is taking place. Such a struggle can be a good thing. When we recognize the presence of angry feelings and decide to relinquish our personal rights to God and then choose to speak and behave under His control, we will find ourselves drawing closer to God and to the people around us! New patterns will be replacing the old ones... and we will be well on our way to breaking the anger habit once and for all!



Written by  
Sharon Charles

# Upcoming Events at ALM



## Open Arms Childbirth Class

Four Consecutive Thursdays  
April 7 - 28, 2022

Covering the important information offered in a hospital course, *Open Arms* adds a distinctively-Christian perspective. You will enjoy meeting other expectant couples as you gain practical help in preparing for a great labor and delivery. There is no cost for this course.

Register by contacting the ALM office.



## Lay Christian Counselor Training

*For those who wish to be more  
effective people-helpers.*

**5 Monday evenings:  
October 3 - 31, 2022  
7:00-9:00 PM**

**\$120 per person or \$150 per couple  
(cost includes textbooks)**

*Call or email the ALM office for more information  
or to register for the class.*



## Contact Information

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