Your Response to Anger Matters

Christians often believe that being angry is sinful and that a passive response is superior to an angry response, but the Bible doesn’t say that anger is wrong. God experiences anger and Jesus demonstrated anger. People naturally feel anger when they believe they are hurt, violated, or mistreated, when they see a wrong done to themselves or others (righteous indignation), and when they experience pain or loss. In relationships, we need to be able to deal with our own anger and the anger of other people.

It isn’t comfortable to have people angry with you. Anger evokes a response from the person it is directed at. You can react to anger in these ways:

- Respond with anger by being defensive and attacking.
- Feel victimized and powerless.
- Punish and retaliate.
- Freeze because you shut down emotionally and verbally.
- Hold your response in while staying resentful.
- Take it personally and assume that you did something wrong.
- Conclude that the person does not love you or will abandon you.

While many of us do those things, there are better ways to respond to anger:

- Feel your emotion, formulate a right and responsible response that doesn’t attack or escalate, detach by not taking it personally, respond in a way that values both people and the relationship, set boundaries to protect yourself if necessary, and be willing to listen to the truth behind the cause of the anger, if there is any.
- Suggest you talk later when the person isn’t as angry.
- Attempt to calm the person down by validating their concerns and listening.
Take time to think about your response and let the person know when you are ready to talk.

The healthiest way to deal with your own anger is to feel it and acknowledge it and then deal with the cause of the anger by processing it and deciding if you need to confront the person. If you confront, contain your feelings so you don’t dump the anger on the person and damage the relationship by remembering these things:

- Your anger is yours even if it is in response to what someone else does. Just because you are angry doesn’t mean the other person has done something wrong.
- You can speak in a way that conveys your anger but doesn’t attack, hurt, wound, or destroy by choosing your words and keeping your emotions under control.

And if you don’t ever get angry, you are probably stuffing it. Some of us feel guilty for having angry feelings toward our loved ones but anger is normal and necessary.

Ephesians 4:26 tells us to be angry but not sin in how we deal with it. Each of has the responsibility to control our anger and to know our own triggers. We also need to be aware of the triggers of those around us, not to walk on eggshells, but to recognize patterns in our relationships and also to use wisdom in how to confront and respond. People have a right to be angry but not to mistreat others.

By Karla Downing

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Relationship Prayer

God,

Help me to feel anger when I should feel it. Help me react to my angry feelings in a way that acknowledges the cause but doesn’t mistreat people. Help me to respond to anger directed toward me in a way that validates the person’s feelings but doesn’t allow myself to be mistreated.
Relationship Challenge

- Identify your typical responses to anger toward you.
- Identify your typical way of expressing anger.
- Commit to responding in a healthy way to anger in yourself and others.

**Scripture Meditation**

**Ephesians 4:26**

“‘In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.’”

**Proverbs 15:1**

“A gentle answer turns away wrath.”

We will experience and receive anger in relationships. It is how we respond and react to the anger that determines if it is healthy or destructive.

If you have any questions you would like to ask Karla, please feel free to email her at karla@changemyrelationship.com.

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