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ANGER

TAMING A
POWERFUL
EMOTION

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AUTHOR OF *THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES*®

Gary Chapman

People who fly into a rage
always make a bad landing.

WILL ROGERS



CHAPTER 3

WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY FOR GOOD REASON

The following people all feel anger for different reasons. Yet the object of their anger is the same. Can you recognize what it is?

- Every time Monique attends a family gathering, she prays beforehand. Why? Because she knows her younger sister Felicia will “get on her case” about something: her hairstyle, her eating habits, or the way she treats their mother. Monique tries to maintain peace for her mother’s sake, but inwardly she’s furious.
- Ben is an independent consultant running his own business. One of his clients owes him a sizable amount. Ben has called, written, texted, emailed, and dropped by in person. The

client keeps promising, but the check is never in the mail. Ben is extremely angry and contemplating a lawsuit.

- Anna and Nate have been dating for months and are beginning to talk marriage. Anna loves Nate, but it bothers her that he invariably runs late. Now, as she waits for him to pick her up after work, she begins to feel the familiar irritation.
- Alan's neighbor Tony decided last week to begin landscaping his front yard. In the process of removing shrubs, he took out two that were on Alan's lot. When Alan saw the holes and his bushes gone, he was shocked and then angry. His wife, Marilyn, gets an earful when she arrives home from work.
- Christina is sitting in my office, distraught. "I don't understand it," she said. "Steve and I have been married for fourteen years, and we've had a good marriage. Now he tells me he doesn't love me anymore and that he's in love with someone else. How could he be in love with someone else? Just last week he made love to me. How could he do that if he's in love with someone else?"

All these people feel angry toward the same object: someone else. This is the kind of anger we are discussing in this chapter: anger toward someone with whom you have a relationship. It may be a family member, roommate, friend, work associate, neighbor—anyone with whom you have an ongoing relationship.

POSITIVE? LOVING?

In processing anger toward someone with whom you have a relationship, two questions are paramount: 1. Is my response *positive*—does it have the potential for dealing with the wrong and

healing the relationship? 2. Is my response *loving*—is it designed for the benefit of the person at whom I am angry?

We're talking here about *valid* anger—that is, anger provoked by genuine wrongdoing on the part of the other person, as in the above examples. How then should Monique, Ben, and the others deal with their valid anger? I counsel a five-step process: (1) consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry; (2) restrain your immediate response; (3) locate the focus of your anger; (4) analyze your options; and (5) take constructive action. As we complete each step, we move toward making our anger productive.

“YES, I’M ANGRY!”

First, consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry. “That’s obvious,” you might reply. “Anyone would know that I am angry.” Perhaps, but the question is, Are you *conscious* of your anger? Because the emotion of anger comes on so suddenly, often we are caught up in a verbal or physical response to the anger before ever consciously acknowledging what is going on inside of us. We are far more likely to make a positive response to our anger if we first acknowledge to ourselves that we are angry.

I suggest that you say the words out loud. “I am angry about this! Now what am I going to do?” Such a statement places the issues squarely on the table. You are now not only aware of your own anger, but you have distinguished for yourself the difference between your anger and the action you are going to take. You have set the stage for applying reason to your anger rather than simply being controlled by your emotions. This is an important first step in processing anger positively.

As simple as this may sound, some Christians have difficulty

with this. All their lives they have been taught that anger is sin. Thus, to admit that they are angry is to admit that they are sinning. But this is not the biblical perspective on anger. I hope that the first two chapters have made it clear that the experience of anger is not sinful. It is a part of our humanity and reflects the anger experienced by God Himself. The apostle Paul stated it clearly when he said, “In your anger do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26 NIV). The challenge is not “Don’t get angry”; the challenge is not to sin when we are angry.

That is precisely the topic we are addressing in this chapter. “How do I keep from sinning when I am angry?” Or to put it in a positive way, “How do I respond to my anger so that my actions will be constructive?” I believe that consciously and verbally acknowledging to yourself that you are angry is a first step in reaching this objective.

RESTRAINT: COUNTING TO 1,000

Second, restrain your immediate response. Very few adults have learned how to control and direct their anger. Most of us follow the

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patterns we learned in childhood by observing our parents or other significant adults. These patterns tend to cluster around two extremes: verbal or physical venting on the one hand, or withdrawal and silence on the other. Both are destructive.

For most of us, anger control will be something we must learn as adults, and that means *unlearning* old habits. Thus, restraining our immediate response is extremely important in establishing

new patterns. Restraining our response is not the same as storing our anger. It is refusing to take the action that we typically take when feeling angry. Solomon wisely wrote, “Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back” (Proverbs 29:11). And again, “Sensible people control their temper” (Proverbs 19:11). Or consider the soberness of this proverb by Solomon: “Short-tempered people do foolish things” (14:17). Author Ambrose Bierce said, “Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.” Most of us have had the experience of saying or doing things in the immediate flush of anger that we later regretted but unfortunately were unable to erase. Or perhaps we sent a scathing text or email to someone in the heat of the moment. Far better to learn to restrain our immediate response.

From time to time I meet people in my marriage seminars who say to me, “I cannot control my anger. When I get angry, I’m overwhelmed. I can’t stop. I just go berserk.” While I am sympathetic with what the person is saying, and I understand the overpowering nature of anger once it starts to roll, I believe that this is an ill-founded statement. It is true that once we begin to release anger in a destructive way verbally or physically, it’s difficult to stop the flow of lava. But there is that moment before the red-hot words begin to flow that we can train ourselves to restrain that response.

Did your mother give you this commonsense advice? “When you’re angry, count to ten before you do or say anything.” It is good advice, but many of us may need to count to 100 or even 1,000. This long delay may quell the fire within. Many have found this to be a workable technique in helping them restrain their response.

I suggest that you count out loud. If you are in the presence of the person at whom you are angry, I suggest you leave. Take a walk

as you count. About halfway around the block when you come to 597, you will probably be in a mental and emotional state where you can stop and say, “I am angry about this. Now what am I going to do?” For the Christian, this is the time to pray, “Lord, You know that I am angry. I believe that what they have done is wrong. Please help me make a wise decision about how to respond in this situation.” Then with God you begin to look at your options.

Another technique that I have often shared in my marriage seminars is to call “time-out” when you realize that you are angry. This may be expressed verbally by simply saying the word “time-out,” or it may be expressed visually by the time-out sign often seen in athletic events on television in which outstretched fingers on both hands are brought together to form a *T*. It is your symbol for saying, “I’m feeling angry right now and I don’t want to lose it, so time-out.” If both of you understand that this is a positive technique and not a cop-out on the situation, then you can accept this as a positive step in controlling anger. Please note that the time-out is not for three months; it is simply for a brief time to give you an opportunity to get in control of your emotions so that you can approach the situation with constructive action.

WHY ARE YOU REALLY ANGRY?

Step three takes place as you are restraining your immediate response. While you are on your “time-out” and after you have counted to 100—or 1,000—*locate the focus of your anger*. If you are angry with your spouse, ask yourself the following questions: Why am I so angry? Is it what my spouse has said or done? Is it the way he or she is talking? Is it the way he or she is looking at me? Does my spouse’s behavior remind me of my mother or father? Is my anger toward

my spouse influenced by something that happened at work today or in my childhood years ago?

Sheila was angry because her teenage son Josh neglected to clean his room before leaving the house—and her mother was due to arrive in three hours. After Josh had gone out and Sheila had time to cool down and reflect on the episode, she realized that her anger toward Josh was more about her mother than about her son. Her mind rushed back to a scene years ago in which her mother had glared at her and said, “You’ll never amount to anything. Look, you can’t even keep your room cleaned up.” That same mother would soon walk through the door and observe Josh’s room. Would this be the final evidence that Sheila was indeed a failure? She admitted that if her mother were not coming, Josh’s room would not be a big deal to her. In fact, his room was often cluttered. This understanding helped Sheila take a more positive approach to her anger.

The bottom line in locating the focus of your anger is to discover the wrong committed by the person at whom you are angry. What is the person’s sin? How has she wronged you? Doug angrily said of his wife, Kelly, “She never has any time for me! I wish someone would tell her that she’s married.” When he analyzed his anger, he realized that the issue was not whether Kelly should go out with her friends. His anger really focused on his unmet need for love. In his mind, that was the real issue. A wife should express love to her husband. He did not feel loved. He felt neglected. His anger really focused on Kelly’s failure to meet his emotional need for love. This insight led him to process his anger in a much more constructive manner.

The secondary issue is, how serious is the offense? Nate not showing up on time for a date is certainly not on the same level as Nate being abusive. Some wrongs are minor and some are major. Each

calls for a different response. To have the same response to minor issues as one does for major issues is to mismanage one's anger.

You may find it helpful to rate the seriousness of the issue on a scale of one to ten, with ten as the most serious of offenses and one as a minor irritation. Numbering the level of offense will not only help you get it in perspective, but sharing the number with the person at whom you are angry may prepare him or her mentally and emotionally to process the anger with you. If you tell me the issue is a "two," I will know that this will not take all night and that if I give you my full attention and seek to understand, we can solve this one rather easily. On the other hand, if you tell me it is a "ten," I know I'm in for a long evening and must postpone my book reading till another night.

CONFRONT—OR OVERLOOK?

Locating the focus of your anger and the seriousness of the offense prepares you for taking *step four: Analyze your options*. It is now time to ask the question, What are the possible actions I could take? You may want to write down the thoughts that come to your mind or verbalize them aloud to yourself.

The options are many. You could go back and give them a verbal berating because of their unjust, unkind, unloving, unthinking, uncaring behavior. You could also bring up all the past failures that come to your mind. You could even use curse words to show them how strongly you feel about the matter. You could go back and physically hit them over the head with a ball bat, slap them in the face, shake them vigorously, or throw a pop bottle at them. You might dismiss them with a mental putdown: *They're stupid, dumb, ignorant. I'm not going to waste my time even talking about the*

matter. It doesn't help to talk with an idiot. I'll just go to my computer room and never mention it again. Or you might try for an element of revenge through isolation: I will walk out of their lives and never see them again and never give them any further explanation. Let them experience rejection for a while. These and many more options may flood your mind.

Which of these, if any, are prudent options? Well, remember our two fundamental questions: Is it positive and is it loving? That is, does the action I am considering have any potential for dealing with the wrong and helping the relationship? And is it best for the person at whom I am angry? It is my guess you will agree that most of the options we have noted above will not pass these tests. Theoretically they are options, but they are not constructive options. They are the kinds of things I may have done in the past, but they are not the kinds of things I want to do in the future.

What then are the Christian's options? As I see it, there are only two. One is to lovingly confront the person. The other is to consciously decide to overlook the matter. Let's look at the second option first. There are times when the best Christian option is to admit that I have been wronged but to conclude that confronting the person who did the wrong holds little or no redemptive value. Therefore, I choose to accept the wrong and commit the person to God. This is not the same as stuffing or storing your anger. It is quite the opposite. It is releasing the anger to God. It is giving up the right to take revenge, which, according to Scripture, is always God's prerogative (see Romans 12:19), and it is refusing to let what has happened eat away at your own sense of well-being. You are making a conscious choice to overlook the offense.

This is what the Bible calls *forbearance*, and it's turning the

matter of justice over to God, knowing that He is totally aware of the situation. Thus, God can do to the individual whatever He judges to be wise. You are choosing not to be an emotional captive to the wrong that was perpetrated against you.

At times this option may be the best. For example, your parents have wronged you for many years or hurt you deeply on two or three counts at crucial periods in your life. You have had a surface relationship with them, but the anger has lived in your heart all these years. Perhaps you have now become a Christian or are now growing as a Christian, and you want to deal with this anger. You look at your parents, who are now in their eighties. You know in your heart that they are not capable of understanding or responding to the hurt that you have felt. You remember making an attempt on one occasion several years ago and getting nowhere. Thus, you decide it's time to let it go.

You may say, "I will never have the in-depth relationship I wish with my parents, but to confront them at this point would

be counter-productive; therefore, I release my anger and hurt to God, knowing that He loves me with an unconditional love, knowing that He is both a just and merciful God and will do what is right by my parents." And then you say: "I release my parents to His care, and I release

my anger and allow God's Holy Spirit to fill my being and cleanse me from all resentment and anger." You have consciously chosen the road of forbearance.

Here's another instance where a forbearing response might

**THE CHRISTIAN HAS TWO
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CONFRONT THE PERSON,
OR TO DECIDE TO
OVERLOOK THE MATTER.**

be best. Your supervisor at work has treated you unfairly. In the process of analyzing your anger and exploring your options, you remember that five of your friends have confronted the same supervisor in recent years—and each of them was summarily dismissed. Thus, you conclude that the supervisor is an uncaring, unreasonable individual, that talking with her would likely make things worse. Realizing that you have a family to support and that jobs are not readily available at the moment, you choose to let it go. You know that choosing to do so will not change your feelings or thoughts about the supervisor. You still feel the hurt, and you still perceive that you have been treated unfairly, but you make the conscious choice to let it go. Perhaps you begin looking for another job, or perhaps you will realize that to stay with the company means that you will likely not advance up the corporate ladder as long as your supervisor is with the company. In either case, you affirm that confronting the supervisor with your anger will again be counterproductive.

When taking such action, you release both the supervisor and your anger to God. To get on with your life, you deem those actions to be best. Doing so will not enhance your relationship with your supervisor, but at least it gives you the freedom to invest your emotional and physical energies in activities that are more productive.

There are many other occasions in which overlooking the offense may be the best option. The Scriptures acknowledge that this is often a valid way to handle one's anger. For example, "Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back" (Proverbs 29:11). Our anger is released to God. The whole matter is placed in His hands, and we move on with our lives.

However, far more often the wise response to anger is to lovingly

confront the person who has wronged you in an effort to seek resolution. “If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive” (Luke 17:3). Notice that Jesus is talking about those with whom you have a relationship. He says, “If another believer sins . . . against you.” Furthermore, the word translated *to rebuke* means literally “to set a weight upon.” Thus, to rebuke is to lay a matter before someone, to clearly bring it to the person’s attention. There are numerous examples of this in the New Testament.

On one occasion Jesus began to teach His disciples that He was going to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and that He would be killed and after three days He would rise again. The Scriptures record the reaction of one disciple: “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him” (Mark 8:32 NIV). Why did Peter rebuke Jesus? Because in his mind, what Jesus was saying was wrong. *This is not the way you establish a kingdom. And certainly my Master is not going to be killed.* Perhaps Peter thought Jesus was depressed, but he certainly didn’t agree with what Jesus was saying, so he privately rebuked Him.

In response, “Jesus turned and looked at his disciples.” Then “he rebuked Peter. ‘Get behind me, Satan!’ he said. ‘You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns’” (Mark 8:33 NIV). Jesus knew that Peter misunderstood reality; that in fact he was speaking the words of Satan. In brief, Peter was wrong, and Jesus clearly confronted him with his wrong. On another occasion, Jesus rebuked James and John for their hostile attitude toward the unbelieving Samaritans. They suggested, “‘Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them. So they went on to another village” (Luke 9:54–56). Clearly their attitude was wrong, and Jesus brought the matter to their attention.

Rebuke is not verbal abuse. Rebuke is laying a matter before a brother or sister whom you perceive to have wronged you. Such a rebuke needs to be done kindly and firmly, recognizing that there is always a possibility that we have misunderstood the brother's words or actions as Peter misunderstood the words of Jesus regarding the Savior's approaching death.

I often suggest that people write their rebuke before trying to speak it. It may go something like this: "I've got something that has been bothering me. In fact, I guess I would have to say I'm feeling angry. Perhaps I am misunderstanding the situation, but when you have an opportunity, I'd like to talk with you about it."

Such a statement reveals where you are, openly reveals your anger, and requests an opportunity to process it with the person involved. You have acknowledged up front that your perception may be imperfect, but at any rate, you want to get the issue resolved. Few people will not respond with an opportunity to talk about it if you approach them in such a manner. If given the opportunity, then you lay before them your perception of what you heard or saw or think to be true, and ask if you are understanding the situation correctly. This gives the person an opportunity to (1) share with you information that you may not be aware of, or (2) explain his motives in what he did or said, or (3) clearly admit to you that what he did was wrong and to ask your forgiveness.

In this context of open communication, each trying to understand the other, the issue will be resolved. Either by the other's explanation or the other's confession of wrong, the framework is laid for reconciliation. If the person admits to wrongdoing and expresses a repentant attitude, the clear teaching of Jesus is that we are to forgive the individual.

In Matthew 18:15–17, Jesus described how this principle works in the context of the local church. “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.” And how do you treat a pagan or a tax collector? You pray for his salvation and you pray for his restoration. You treat the person with dignity and respect, as an individual for whom Christ died. But you cannot have warm fellowship with him because he refuses to deal with the offense, which always divides.

Thus, in the church or out of the church, reconciliation with a friend or family member is always the ideal. Confronting is never for the purpose of condemning but rather for restoring the relationship to one that is genuine, open, and loving. If there has been a misunderstanding, the air is to be cleared so that we can resume fellowship as brothers or husband and wife. If wrongdoing is confessed, we are to forgive and the relationship is restored. The apostle Paul wrote that we must always remember that next time we may be the one who offends (see Galatians 6:1). None of us is perfect, and when we do wrong, we are likely to stimulate anger in the person whom we have wronged.

Loving confrontation is not easy for most people. We have had no training and very little experience in this approach to handling anger. We are far more experienced in either ventilating or seeking to deny or hide our anger, but such approaches are always

destructive. Loving confrontation with a view to reconciliation is normally the best approach.

THE FINAL STEP: TAKE CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION

Which brings us to our *fifth step: Take constructive action*. Once we have explored our options, it is time to take action. If I choose to let the offense go, then I should share this decision with God. You might say something like this: “Lord, You know what has happened. You know how hurt I am, how angry I feel. But I really believe that the best thing for me to do in this situation is to accept the wrong and turn the person over to You. You know not only his actions but his motives. I know that You are a righteous God, so I trust You to do what is right by the person. I also release my anger to You. The anger moved me to think through the situation, and I am taking the step I believe to be best. Therefore, the matter is over. My anger has served its purpose, and I release it to You. Help me not to be controlled by any residual thoughts and feelings that come to me over the next few days. I want to use my life constructively and not be hindered by this event.

Thank You that I am Your child and You will take care of me.”

If over the next few days or weeks your mind reverts to the wrong done to you, and the emotions of

hurt and anger return, take those thoughts and feelings to God and say, “Lord, You know what I am remembering right now, and You know the feelings that I am feeling. But I thank You that I have dealt with that, and I release these thoughts and feelings to You. Help me now to do something constructive with my life the rest of

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this day.” Then you move out to face the challenges of today.

On the other hand, if you choose the option of lovingly confronting the person who has wronged you, remember the challenge given by Paul. “Brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself” (Galatians 6:1). Your confrontation may go something like this: “I have something that is bothering me, and I need your input. Is there a time we can talk?”

If your request is granted, you may say something like, “I’m feeling some hurt and anger over something that happened. I know that I may be misunderstanding the situation. That’s why I want to talk about it. Yesterday when you [whatever], I interpreted that as a very unkind action. I felt like you were not considering my feelings at all. Maybe I misunderstood your actions, but I need to resolve this.” Perhaps the person will give an explanation that will shed light upon his or her actions and give you a different perspective on the actions and the person’s intentions. On the other hand, the person may admit that what he or she did was thoughtless and unkind and may ask you to forgive him or her. In this case, you must always forgive.

If the offense was extremely grave in nature, forgiveness may not restore your trust in the person. We will discuss the nature of forgiveness in a later chapter, but forgiveness is the promise that you will no longer hold this particular offense against the person. Your anger has served its purpose, and the two of you are reconciled.

Such loving confrontation typically results in either a genuine confession of wrongdoing and the extending of forgiveness, or the conversation sheds new light upon the subject; you learn that what

the person said or did was not exactly what you had perceived or that the motives were not the ones that you had attributed to him or her. In either case, the issue is cleared; the matter is resolved and the relationship continues to grow. Anger has served its rightful purpose. It has motivated you to take constructive action to see that the issue was resolved.

“I DON'T WANT MONEY TO COME BETWEEN US”

Confrontation does not always lead to justice, but it may well lead to a restored relationship. Nick, a hardworking entrepreneur, had achieved some success in his business and had accumulated a substantial investment portfolio. Jerry, his longtime friend, was starting a new business and came to Nick asking for a loan of \$50,000 to help him get his business off the ground. Nick freely loaned him the money. They each signed a simple loan agreement that Jerry could have the money for one year without interest and after that would repay the entire sum or renegotiate the loan.

By the end of the year, Jerry's business was no longer in existence, and the \$50,000 had been spent. Jerry got another job, but his salary was not adequate to repay the loan. He promised to repay Nick whenever he was able over the next five years. Jerry never made enough to repay the loan. He had good intentions but never came through with the money. Nick let it ride but struggled with anger toward Jerry.

Eventually Nick had a reversal in his own business and could really have used the \$50,000, but Jerry was not able to pay. After much prayer and talking with his pastor and other trusted advisors, he confronted Jerry and shared his anger. Jerry expressed his own pain that he had not been able to repay the loan. “If I had the money,

I would give it to you,” he said. “If I ever get it, I will give it to you.”

Nick decided to no longer expect the money from Jerry. He told Jerry, “We’ve been friends for a long time. I don’t want money to be a barrier between us. If you are ever able to repay the loan, I would really like that, but if not, I’m not going to pressure you over the money.”

Nick had the legal right to sue Jerry for failure to repay. However, he knew that to do so would devastate Jerry financially. He chose not to do that, believing that it would serve no good purpose. His was the choice to accept less than he desired. He and Jerry are still friends, and Jerry is grateful for Nick’s attitude and sincerely hopes that someday he will be able to repay his old friend.

There are times when choosing not to seek justice is the best alternative. For Nick, this was a conscious choice that came after confronting Jerry with his thoughts and feelings. Confrontation led to a resolution that was something less than ideal. But Nick is now free from his anger, and his relationship with Jerry has improved.

Of course, there is always the possibility that when you confront someone the person will deny wrongdoing, even though you know the person has wronged you. This often happens when a spouse confronts a partner who is guilty of having an affair. The partner lies in order to protect himself or herself. The lie itself gives rise to more anger. If you are certain of your facts, you must then realize that you cannot reconcile with this person. Unconfessed sin fractures relations with people and God. You must then decide what your next step will be. This may be turning to a pastor, counselor, or trusted friend to seek advice. It may be reading an appropriate book. It will certainly mean prayer for God’s guidance in what you should do.

If after further confrontation the person refuses to deal with his wrongdoing, you must eventually acknowledge that the person is choosing not to continue his relationship with you. We cannot make people confess, repent, and reconcile with us. We must let them walk away, and we must pray for them. Loving confrontation does not always result in reconciliation, but it does give us the peace of mind that we sought to deal with the wrong in a responsible manner.

In summary, here are the steps in responding to anger:

1. Consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry.
2. Restrain your immediate response.
3. Locate the focus of your anger.
4. Analyze your options.
5. Take constructive action.

This is the road to making anger productive—and it is worth spending some time reflecting on and praying about these steps, or even jotting them in a journal if you are so inclined. You will also find some pointers on these five steps in the summary “Quick Takes” (next page).

QUICK TAKES

HOW TO HANDLE YOUR ANGER

1. Consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry.

Say it out loud: "I'm angry about this! Now what am I going to do?" Such a statement makes you aware of your own anger and also helps you recognize both your anger and the action you are going to take. You have set the stage for applying reason to your anger.

2. Restrain your immediate response. Avoid the common but destructive responses of verbal or physical venting or their opposite, withdrawal and silence. Refuse to take the action that you typically take when feeling angry. Waiting can help you avoid both saying and doing things you may not mean and later will regret.

3. Locate the focus of your anger. What words or actions by the other person have made you angry? If the person has truly wronged you, identify the person's sin. How has she wronged you? Then determine how serious the offense is. Some wrongs are minor and some are major. Knowing its seriousness should affect your response.

4. Analyze your options. Ask yourself: Does the action I am considering have any potential for dealing with the wrong and helping the relationship? And is it best for the person at whom I am angry? The two most constructive options are either to confront the person in a helpful way, or to consciously decide to overlook the matter.

5. Take constructive action. If you choose to "let the offense go," then, in prayer, confess your anger and your willingness to turn the person over to God. Then release your anger to Him. If you choose to confront the person who has wronged you, do so gently. Listen to any explanation; it can give you a

different perspective on the person's actions and intentions. If the person admits that what he or she did was wrong and asks you to forgive, do so.

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