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Anger

let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19–20)



Article by Nancy Fujii
Founder and Teacher, L.I.G.H.T. Kingdom Kids®

Understanding Anger

People experience anger when someone interferes with their desires, challenges their values, or disagrees with their beliefs. Anger is a natural response to a real or perceived injustice that allows us to defend good or attack wrongdoing. Anger often creates a desire to harm someone who interfered with you having what you want.

Anger is not a sin. It is a God-given emotion, but only a rock-solid Christian character keeps it innocent. We can always justify our anger when we feel it. It's in our bodies, and we react without thinking.

Sometimes, people are angry about something that didn't happen the way they thought it did or how someone else said it did, and we can make false assumptions about a person's motivation for doing something. Anger comes from our hearts, so holding others responsible for our emotions is unfair. If we are honest about our part, we won't need to blame others for our emotions.

Managing Anger

If you want to express anger about something someone said or did that you disagree with and feel is wrong, do it respectfully and don't remain angry. Practicing how to handle anger like Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us through prayer will help us do what we cannot do alone. Practicing the teachings of Jesus works from the inside out.

We can only change when we see our need to change. Guide your child to examine their heart to understand why they think, feel, and act as they do, helping them see their nature and need for God. Your child must see what's in their heart, confess their wrongdoing, seek forgiveness, and not blame others or remain angry.

Practice Jesus' Teachings

- Read scripture to your child, or if they can read, let them spend time alone reading God's Word—an excellent place to begin is Psalm 23 and 1 Peter 3:12.
- Help your child let go of their need to control other people and pray for healing.
- Pray that your child understands not getting what they want is not a "big deal."
- Help your child trust and believe they are safe in God's care. (Psalm 23)
- Teach your child the meaning of the cross in our daily lives.
- Teach your child it's okay to stand up for what is right but to do it respectfully.

Connect

Connect with your child by saying you noticed something that concerns you about their words or actions. Share what you saw and your concerns and let your child reply. Continue to ask “why” they felt and acted as they did until they know why. Explain that anger comes from our hearts, so you are trying to help them see what’s inside theirs. When you ask children why they did something, they often tell you it’s another person’s fault. Our goal is to teach children about taking responsibility for our own emotions. Our concern should always be what motivates our behaviors.

Teach

Teach your child that anger is sometimes right. For example, kids sometimes want to help other kids who get bullied. Their anger makes them want to help, so that anger can be for a good reason, but only Jesus can handle anger properly. That’s called righteous anger. Jesus showed righteous anger by cleansing the temple and in His response to the religious leaders and their attitudes toward His healing of a sick man. But most people act in unrighteous anger and need help to control it because anger leads to other negative attitudes like resentment, bitterness, hate, and actions like hurting others for what they did.

Model

Model how Jesus handled anger by confessing a time you were angry and sharing what was going on in your heart that caused your anger. Pray that God removes what is in your heart that caused the anger and ask God for forgiveness. Showing our children that we struggle with the same things they do helps them feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings. Practice asking each other for forgiveness. After practicing a few times, take your child to their friend to model how forgiveness works. Then, thank God for helping you forgive one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Prayer

Father, thank you for your patience with us. Please help us examine our hearts to confess our wrongdoing and help us see our weakness and need for You. Give us the ability to listen more than we talk and the desire to love and forgive others the way you love and always forgive us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Scripture

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:19–20)

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (Ephesians 4:26)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” (1 Peter 3:12)

Psalm 23

The Lord Is My Shepherd
A psalm of David
The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.