

Reach for Recovery¹

Part 3: Anger – Do People Want to Be Around You?

This month, we continue with Part 3 of our *Reach for Recovery*¹ series. There are remarried spouses and children that are struggling to make their life and blended family a success. Often, a part of the struggle is that one or more family members are carrying hurts, failures, disappointments, negative feelings, negative attitudes, unforgiveness, and/ or bad habits from their past --- into their present.

Today we want to take a close look at *UNRESOLVED ANGER*.

What is anger? Webster defines anger as, *a violent passion of the mind excited by a real or supposed injury; usually accompanied with a propensity to take vengeance, or to obtain satisfaction from the offending party*. Anger is a negative emotion that is caused by **frustration, hurt** or **fear**. When we experience divorce, death of a loved one, a difficult situation in our job, or other adversity, we may become angry. Anger is often directed toward the one who hurt us, but we can also become angry with ourselves, our family, or even with GOD.

Typical triggers that bring on anger include:

1. Frustration from not receiving what we expected.
2. Hurt from someone who offended us.
3. A person who is trying to control your life.
4. Fear that something bad will happen.
5. Expecting more from others.
6. A significant disappointment in your life.
7. A failure in your life that you feel responsible for.

Unresolved Anger

What is unresolved anger? It is anger that a person refuses to let go of. Someone may continue to harbor ill feelings toward a person who has hurt him or her deeply, such as a former spouse or former friend who betrayed them, or a former spouse who is still trying to control their life.

Unresolved anger is an enemy of all present and future relationships in your life. It is impossible to channel negative emotions to one area, or one person in your life. *Your unresolved anger will spill onto every person in your life, and will damage those relationships*. Your loved ones will find it difficult to be around you, not knowing what your mood will be on any given day. It is difficult to have a healthy relationship with someone who you have to walk on “egg shells” around.

Other consequences of unresolved anger include unintentionally pushing loved ones away from us (no one wants to be around an angry person), distancing ourselves from other people (our pain causes us to not care about other’s feelings), creating distance from God, not liking ourselves, and immature behavior (saying things we do not mean, and putting unreasonable demands on our loved ones).

When anger reaches its full worth, it turns into REVENGE. Webster defines *revenge* as, 1. To inflict pain or injury in return for an injury received. 2. To vindicate by punishment of an enemy. OK, are you saying to yourself right now, “Yes, that’s me; just give me the opportunity!”

God’s Word

What does God’s Word say about anger? I’m glad you asked!

Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32 reads, “And don’t sin by letting anger gain control over you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. ³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Proverbs 22:24 says, “Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 reads, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Psalms 30: 5 states, “For His (God’s) anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.”

Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

Seven Steps

Unresolved anger is difficult to unload, but here are seven steps to help a person successfully eliminate anger:

1. Define the hurt, fear, disappointment, or offense!

It is necessary to discover the root cause of your anger. It may be from something that happened when you were a child. If you cannot determine the cause yourself, consider talking to a Pastor or professional counselor --- an objective view can likely help you uncover your source of hurt, frustration or fear.

2. Allow yourself to grieve your hurt, loss or disappointment!

After you have grieved, it is time to quit looking backward (which is where your offenses took place) and move forward in the new life God has planned for you. *Jeremiah 29: 11* reads, "*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*" God only speaks of and plans for your future --- never your past or present.

3. Try to understand the one who has offended you!

a.) *We judge ourselves by our intentions, but we judge offenders by their actions.* When we have hurt someone, we ask for forgiveness, saying that we did not mean to hurt them; our intentions were right. However, when someone has hurt us, their actions speak louder than their reasoning and we usually hold them accountable, distancing ourselves from the offender.

b.) *Realize that it is hurting people who hurt people!* Perhaps the one who offended you never intended to harm you, or perhaps the presence of anger or hurt in your offender's life causes them to hurt you and others.

When we are angry with someone, we do not see the value in that person, and we do not want to let them off the hook. Keep in mind that God loves that person as much as He loves you. Jesus paid a great price to remove your sins, and your offender's sins.

4. Separate the offense from the offender.

When someone has hurt us, every time we see or think of that person we think of that hurt. We tie the hurt to the person. We need to separate those two, in the same way that God does for us. Though we have sin, God is willing to separate our sin from us. God is then able to see our potential -- as we are made in His image and likeness.

5. Look for the PEARLS in the offense!

Everyone has value, as well as shortcomings, and every hurt and disappointment has a silver lining. If we look to God to deliver us from our pain and our past, we grow through our difficulties and disappointments. *God never wastes our painful experiences --- He uses them to make us better people.*

6. Put your feelings in writing!

a.) Keep a journal or diary, expressing your feelings to God. Do not be afraid to tell God exactly how you are feeling or hurting --- He already knows your heart. Writing it down has a way of bringing clarity and healing to you.

b.) If you are hurt, write a letter to the offender. Spell out the offense, and end with a "*statement of forgiveness and release.*" (You may or may not choose to deliver the letter.)

7. Reach out to your offender!

In *Matthew 5:43-45*, Jesus said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*"

Our initial response is usually, "No way, God! I'm not praying for or doing good for that person." But if you would try it, you will find that you will be more blessed than the one you are blessing.

BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD --- read the Bible, attend a church that will challenge your spiritual growth, and pray often!

BE QUICK TO FORGIVE AND RELEASE YOUR OFFENDER --- you only hurt yourself and those around you if you do not.

EXPECT GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP YOU OVERCOME YOUR FEAR, DISAPPOINTMENT, OR OFFENSE

RELEASE THE OFFENDER. We cannot accomplish this without God's help.

BECOME A BLESSING TO ALL OF YOUR NEW FAMILY MEMBERS!

Go forth in God!!!

Special thanks to Joe Martin, Reach for Recovery instructor, who contributed to this article!

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¹*Reach for Recovery*

Moe & Paige Becnel have organized, written parts, and teach parts of *Reach for Recovery*, a divorce recovery program at Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, LA. *Reach for Recovery* is designed to guide people who have experienced divorce through the emotional pain of a broken relationship, to identify mistakes that we make in relationships, and to teach Godly relationship principles.

If you did not attend a divorce recovery program before you remarried, this series of articles provides you a chance to learn and apply some key principles from *Reach for Recovery* that will help you to make your new relationships successful.

To learn more about the Reach for Recovery program, contact Moe and Paige Becnel at Healing Place Church, 19202 Highland Rd., Baton Rouge, LA, 70809. paige.becnel@healingplacechurch.org