

# CONTROLLING ANGER

HOW TO BE ANGRY AND NOT SIN

By Neil Ortiz



**K**ing David wrote, “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11), teaching us that justice and anger are God’s attributes. The Bible tells us how to exhibit these godly traits, “Be angry, and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). Most of our failures in rightfully controlling anger stem from the fact that as sinful humans, we are not the just judge that God is. Anger is not the problem; misapplied and mishandled anger is.

Unrighteous expressions of anger threaten intimacy in a marriage. Such episodes include fiery outbursts of verbal or physical wrath as well as the ice-cold chill of withholding affection. One of our greatest difficulties is that we’re really passionate about what angers us. Author Ed Welch described such anger as “uncontrolled rightness.” How do we learn to control ungodly anger in our marriages? Consider these five strategies:

1. When you sense your blood begin to boil, take a break before you foolishly vent your feelings (see Proverbs 29:11). Wives may want to take a soothing bath to think about addressing the issues in a non-combative way; husbands may take a walk to get their thoughts in order. Establish rules for fighting fairly.



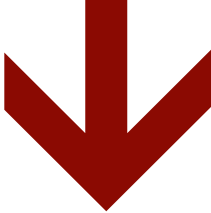
2. Talk *with*—not *at*—your spouse when you disagree (see Matthew 18:15). Avoiding meaningful dialogue will lead to more problems in your marriage. Take the time to talk things through.

3. Expand your emotional vocabulary. Often fatigue, embarrassment, frustration, rejection, fear, etc. come across as anger. Slow down and describe the real emotion you're experiencing to your husband or wife. It's okay to say, "I had a bad day." God provided your spouse as your helpmate, not your opponent.

4. Count the cost. Ask yourself, "Is this a hill worth dying for?" Spending your anger on trivial matters ("*You left dirty socks on the floor again!*"; "*Why isn't dinner on the table yet?*") will leave you less to work with on the truly important matters of your marriage.

5. Repent. In every disagreement there are at least three people involved: the husband, the wife, and the Lord. Both parties are accountable to God for their words and actions. The Lord doesn't permit us to be enraged with our spouse. When you blow it, ask for forgiveness from God and your spouse.

The way you settle disagreements with your spouse will set the tone for your household. "The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). And remember, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). It's so much better to follow Christ's example of turning the other cheek rather than stirring the pot.



## RESOLVING CONFLICT

HOW TO GROW CLOSER  
AS A COUPLE

By Yo Snyder



**I**ce cream. It's hard to believe that a treat this wonderful can trigger a conflict between husband and wife. Chocolate or Rocky Road? One scoop or two? Arguments are inevitable. Sometimes we bicker over silly things like ice cream; other times the issues are very serious like finances or family. While conflicts are inevitable, there are ways a couple can grow closer and the relationship can grow deeper as we learn to resolve our differences.

**COMMUNICATION:** Be careful of “you” statements. Pointing the finger and saying, “*You always blah, blah, blah...*” puts your spouse on the defensive and inflames conflict. Changing the pronoun from “you” to “I” helps defuse tension and open up heartfelt conversation. Try saying, “I feel ...” to keep the fires of conflict from raging out of control. And remember, “A soft answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1).

**COMPROMISE:** Marriage isn't a 50-50 compromise; it's a 100-100 compromise. This doesn't mean husbands always need to admit they're wrong (big sigh of relief); nor should wives always give in when disagreements arise (thank goodness). Rather, each party should put the needs of the other above their own. In a Christian home, ego, pride, and self-righteousness (those things that lead to conflict) should recede to the background. Selflessness, humility, and lovingkindness should come



to the foreground. One pastor pointed out that Christ was the first to love, the first to forgive, and the first to sacrifice. In short, He always took the initiative in relationships. Would you rather win an argument or be Christ-like?

**CONCILIATION:** Let's be honest, the best part of any quarrel is making up. Don't let the moment pass. Reconciliation is God's desire for you. Celebrate your reunion after an argument. Have a romantic dinner. Enjoy the closeness you experience on the other side of the conflict. Reflect on what you've learned. What has God taught you about yourself? What has He shown you about your spouse? What has He revealed about Himself? Reward yourselves for handling the situation well. Savor the deeper relationship physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Ice cream may seem like a silly thing to fight over, but so are many things that spark arguments. Regardless of the cause, conflict in marriage is unavoidable. Men and women are too different for everything to run smoothly. However, the way conflict is resolved can either help a marriage grow, mature, and deepen, or cause it to crumble. Rather than getting emotional when you argue with your spouse, ask yourself, *Do I want to be right or do I want to be righteous?* When you seek righteousness, your marriage will grow stronger and more loving as the years go by. "The house of the righteous will stand" (Proverbs 12:7).