

*SECTION I*  
*CHAPTER ♥2♥ Anger Management*

*Key Verses:*

*In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. (Eph 4:26-27 NIV)*

*When Words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. (Proverbs 10:19 NIV)*

*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh Word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1 NIV)*

One of the issues we have to deal with routinely in our marriage is anger. It takes a small infraction to set us off and the hurt it produces is hard to heal. Think back to the last month. Is there something that your partner said to you that makes you angry just thinking about it? We get in a tougher position if there is an issue that's unresolved that serves as a thorn in the marriage and is brought up anytime an issue comes up. The open wound gets a fresh dose of salt in it. Now, I get angry about what happened today poured on top of disappointments from yesterday and the day before. The anger we feel is real and it can be a destructive emotion if we do not manage it properly. If we react to anger the inevitable result will be rage. If we suppress anger the result is depression and/or sickness (headache, ulcer, etc.) So how do we take anger and use it for good? The first step is having a willing heart, mind, and attitude to let this situation work for us. This is extremely difficult in the heat of an argument or when frustration hits. However, I found some techniques that can help you manage the situation.

- ❑ Stay calm, breathe deeply
- ❑ Retreat – Say, “I’m upset now and I need some time to think about this.”
- ❑ Pray – Confess to God how you are feeling and be honest, ask for guidance. In the heat of anger my thoughts are not godly. They are to be right, to avenge and to stop the strife. Turning it over to God means acknowledging your feelings and surrendering to God. Ask for direction in how to approach your spouse in a loving way.
- ❑ Forgive – Release the person and situation to God. This is the hardest thing to do but it has the most to do with our ability to handle our emotions and the situation. It allows us to heal the hurt despite the other person’s reaction or behavior towards us.

Unforgiveness breeds resentment, sarcasm, rage and/or repressed bitterness. It leads ultimately to shouting, fits of rage, and devaluation of our mate in our minds and in our behavior. Devaluation means that the smallest incident causes us to question why we are with our mate and think about life without them. It allows us to feel good saying “He or she does not deserve me and if they keep it up, I am out of here.” Thoughts are the beginning of action and the more we allow these feelings to fuel our thoughts, the easier it is to walk away instead of staying to fight for your relationship.

*What do those thoughts sound like?  
He/she is lucky to have me.  
If it wasn't for (fill in the blank), I would leave him/her high and dry.  
There is someone out there that will love me the way I deserve to be  
loved...  
He/she just gets on my last nerve.*

These are just a few that easily come to mind but they leave out the explicit, derogatory messages that sometimes accompany these thoughts. If we permit these types of thoughts, our mind becomes like a pigpen. It contains some of everything and if you keep rolling around in it you take on its characteristics. As you know the stench of the pigpen is unbearable, as are we when we feed negative thoughts and anger. Everyone knows someone who is walking and talking bitterness as the result of a bad marriage. You want to run in the other direction when you see them coming your way. The point of this discussion is to help you realize a tool of the enemy that is regularly used to chip away and erode the foundation of a marriage. Unresolved anger is a cancer to your marriage that multiplies exponentially. It's something that we could be carrying around without realizing that it is slowly killing our marriage. It kills because the thoughts feed negative Words, behavior and actions. We must be fervent in prayer to break the chain of harbored anger and prevent new chains from forming. Being honest with yourself about your feelings will help you deal with them directly and surrender the situation to God. Our prayer will focus on the 3 things that often prevent us from turning our situation over to God, and they are pride, anger and unforgiveness. Let's Pray...

*Prayer:*

Lord, Heavenly Father, you know that the hurt I have felt and may be feeling right now over (fill in the blank), and I pray Lord, that I would be angry and not sin. Lord, I ask that I would forget the things that are passed away and I would press towards the mark of the high calling of serving you and ministering to my spouse in love even though my heart longs to strike back because of the pain I am feeling right now. Lord, I know you put us together to glorify you and I pray that we would come together in unity. Your Word says a house divided will fall and, Lord, I pray that our house would not be divided by anger and ugly behavior. Help us to put away snide remarks that are disrespectful and keep us talking to each other in loving ways even when we disagree. Help us to admit when we are wrong. Lord, I pray for forgiveness of my wrongs and ask for a forgiving spirit, not just Words to say that I am sorry but actions that demonstrate a changed heart and mind. Lord, let me cast these cares on you. May I never bring the past up again and use it as ammunition in the future. Help us to harvest fruit of the spirit in our marriage of love, kindness, patience, peace and self-control. Help us to remember that we will reap what we sow, so let us sow more love in our relationship so that we would be angry but not sin and that we would seek you for comfort in our time of need. Stay close to us, Father, during this time when we need your wisdom and strength.

## *Reflections & Notes*

- 1. Is this topic reflective of issues experienced in your relationship?*
- 2. Are there other areas of your life where this might apply?*
- 3. Identify one thing that you will change in your relationship to improve it.*
- 4. In your quiet time reflect on how God is asking you to respond this topic.*



*SECTION II*  
*CHAPTER ♥17♥ Show Me The Money*

*Key Verse:*

*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.  
(Philippians 4:19 NIV)*

Money is one of the issues that couples deal with throughout their married life. You get a prelude of the issues before the marriage because you must make a decision about the size and cost of the wedding. A good friend who counsels couples, told us that he knew several couples that spent thousands of dollars on their wedding and they had nothing but bills to start off their marriage. Going into a marriage debt free or financially independent still brings issues that can divide even the most committed mates. Financial crisis, bankruptcy, or severe debt can provide a level of pressure to the day to day living that becomes unbearable. The main key to remember is that the two people working together on finances can find solutions that one person may miss. Also, during tough times if you each share some of the burden, the pressure will not break the spirit of one person. So many times just talking about money issues gets the air filled with tension. Some of the tension is caused by looking at the other person's behavior and not our own. This is just a distraction to addressing the real issues of sharing management of the finances and exercising self-control. The suggestions in this section are practical and take into account that your needs will dictate how you resolve money issues proactively. I think there are three common ways that couples organize their finances:

- 1) OURS
- 2) YOURS and MINE
- 3) YOURS, MINE and OURS

Let's discuss each approach briefly and then you determine what works best for you. In the "OURS" approach, all the money is in one place and each partner has access to it. This approach takes communication to make sure that both partners know what's in the account, what bills are slated to be paid and how much is available for discretionary spending. If you budget an allowance for each mate and there's no surprise spending, this approach can work well. If you do not communicate and one or both mates buy on impulse this approach can result in frustration, bounced checks, and a quick depletion of funds. If you must defend your purchases to your mate when the account balance is low, this approach can be problematic. The key to being successful is having a budget, clearly communicating balances and future expenditures and working together.

The "YOURS and MINE" works well if both spouses have previously identified assets and obligations that they would like to keep separate or if they prefer to manage their money individually. In second marriages, and marriages where a pre-nuptial exists this is quite common. In these cases, it's common for the couple to split expenses and identify who will pay for a specific expense. For example, the husband may pay the mortgage and utilities and the wife may pay for the groceries, car payments and household

expenses. This approach provides shared responsibility in different proportions. Again, as long as fairness and unity occur in this approach, it can work well. The downside to this approach is where the couple maintains too much independence from one another and uses their additional funds without getting input from their mate. I have a couple of friends where the spouse makes large purchases without their input, such as purchasing a car, big screen TV, and other items. It's obvious, that there is unspoken tension on the matter but they avoid dealing with it because they make financial decisions with little input from each other. If one spouse loses his/her job they must adjust to this new financial condition and this also can lead to problems, especially if one mate has used his/her resources to finance extravagant or high dollar purchases and both spouses are responsible to pay the debt. The debt is shared and a change in the financial condition of the union can be devastating when the debts increase beyond their ability to pay.

The hybrid approach that provides more balance and is a compromise approach is the "YOURS, MINE and OURS." This is a household account and joint (his/her) account. It allows for a budget for everything that's done together and separate spending accounts for each spouse. This works best when one spouse is concerned about the other's spending habits and the quantity of things that each person likes to buy. It provides a budget and also an ability to enjoy personal preference without scrutiny. Many couples prefer this approach and it keeps a happy home. The downside is balancing three accounts and during tough financial times that amount may be very small. The most important thing is finding an approach that leads to harmony in the marriage.

There are benefits to utilizing each approach but the most important factor in selecting one of these three approaches is making sure that there is fairness and equality in allocating the resources. Let's establish some basic ground rules regardless of which approach you choose. The ground rules include identifying an equal amount of money for personal use. This should not include maintenance activities such as haircuts and hygiene related items. Most women have a basic level of maintenance for make-up, hair and nails. These expenses should be put in the household budget; otherwise, these expenses will eat up any allowance for her. This is an issue of fairness. On the other hand, men, may have an activity that by itself could take most of their allocation such as golf fees or restoring an antique car. If we're being fair the budget should include an amount for golf fees. Anything extra comes from your allowance for his/her expenses. While I am on this subject, if there is a need to purchase extravagant items as you define it or costly items that you are tempted to purchase without your spouse's knowledge, if you really want it, you should save your allowance and get. Be self-less in managing your desires to purchase things that you want versus need. This will also prevent one person from depleting the checking and savings.

Another approach would be to discuss together some financial goals, and after they are met allow the indulgence to purchase something that you feel is extra or put in the household budget. For example, your husband wants a flat screen television but if you make the purchase now, it will use up the remaining credit on your Visa or deplete your savings. In either case, you should try to identify a plan to get this item, if you can afford it, perhaps, putting away a certain amount over the next six months to pay down your

credit card once you make the purchase or use cash to purchase it outright. The point I am making is that we should make an attempt to work together to make it happen in a responsible way. So many times one mate will say that his/her spouse does not need it and instead of working through the issue, the deprived spouse will sit and simmer with bitterness or will make an impulse buy and take the heat. In most cases, smaller recurring purchases of the same items spark the same type of tension. You know shoes in every color and style, golf clubs in every brand and size, play station games, tools, car parts, jewelry, clothes and the list goes on. The overspending and constant shopping can become a sore spot in the marriage very quickly, especially when it leads to debt that both partners will have to share. The slow steady reduction of cash in the bank can really affect the quality of life for your family and your marriage.

The thing to remember is that your spouse was once on his/her own making decisions to purchase things that he/she wanted. He/she did not have to wait or get anyone's approval. He/she never anticipated giving up this freedom because his/her spouse did not agree with the purchases. Be reasonable and fair to the one you love. If one person is a compulsive shopper, recognize the problem and get some help for yourself and your mate before you are bankrupt. If you are heavily in debt the next topic deals with strategies to alleviate the financial strain. Every couple deals with financial issues, and money is cited as being in the top five factors cited as causing a marriage to breakup. The best strategy is working together and being equal and reasonable in how you want to spend your money.

Tracking your expenses and having an easy way to track what's coming due and what needs to be paid are essential. Many times the burden of paying the bills leads to their not being paid on time. Identify some common goals for your household and stick to them. No matter what each spouse brings into the household he/she should be an equal partner in decisions and use of the funds. If you end the marriage, the courts will settle the matter with equality in distributing the debts and resources. Money can always be a source of friction in a marriage and it's extremely important to take the tough road and decide how you are going to handle money. Once you establish your approach, agree in writing on your goals and start working your plan.

Once you have your approach and your goals, identify who will be responsible for keeping track of your expenses. Let the person who naturally has the best aptitude and financial ability to handle the job responsibly. Men, if it is your wife, let her do it. It doesn't mean that you are not in control of your household, just that God's helpmate is there to help. Over the course of our marriage we have gone back and forth on this issue and through trial and error we have come to a decision on who should have this responsibility. I will say this has been a source of tension for us, but you must work through your money issues. You can't run or hide from financial issues, decisions or problems. The best approach is to handle them immediately. Some financial issues can precipitate a marriage crisis and you really need to address it proactively.

*Prayer:*

Dear God, Our Heavenly Father, we pray that a spirit of harmony would exist between us. Help us to be in one accord about management of our finances. Lord, show us how to be good stewards of your money. Help us to come together in a spirit of love and providing equitably for each other and our family. Lord, we pray now that if our attitude is not like you, that you would reveal it to us. Help us to be cheerful in giving to your church and charities. God give us a heart to be tithers and pour us out a blessing we would not have room enough to receive. Allow us to be builders of your kingdom through our gifts. Lord, I ask that you would keep us in your loving care. Jesus, may we be content in every situation whether well fed or hungry. Teach us how to seek you first so that all things would be given to us. Lord, help us to budget, save and work together on tough financial issues. Lord, you know our need. Show us how to be kind and compassionate to each other in Word and deed and use of the money you have given to us. In Christ's Name I pray. Amen

## *Reflections & Notes*

- 1. Is this topic reflective of issues experienced in your relationship?*
- 2. Are there other areas of your life where this might apply?*
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*SECTION III*  
*CHAPTER ♥25♥ Random Acts of Sensuality*

*Key Verses:*

*Awake, north wind, and come south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits. (Song of Songs 4:16 NIV)*

One of the most memorable times of my life was during the beginning of our married life. My husband, a creative spirit, professional athlete and musician, has always been adept at capturing my heart with spontaneous romantic interludes. I, being encouraged, responded with my own creativity through poetry, private picnics and random acts of sensuality. This continued throughout our marriage but took a noticeable absence during our marriage crisis. Not being excited about each other and in fact being angry at each other killed the spontaneity and romance before the thoughts could become an action. It was simply because it is hard to do something special for someone when he/she is always doing something that gets under your skin. That being said, a true commitment to working beyond our day-to-day routine requires fitting in some fun and sexual energy to the marriage.

It's time to breathe life back into the relationship. It's funny because I jokingly refer to my husband as my boyfriend when I'm emphasizing things he has done for me that have left a sweet, sweet memory in my mind. I am pointing this reference out because when we think of our mates as our lover, we think pleasure and a big smile crosses our face. There had to be some good times and for most of us they were great times. The question remains how do we capture, create, and maintain the passion throughout our marriage. I would say it is through planning love encounters. If you need helpful hints, the Christian bookstore has books that identify great dates and spontaneity and intimate encounters. This could include date nights, small gestures of love, energy when you retire for the evening and passionate kisses. Think back to the excitement of your days of courtship. Obviously, you and your spouse were able to stimulate each other and you still have that ability. For different couples, it's different things. To get yourself started here are some ideas that may spark your creativity.

- 1) an outdoor encounter in a secluded or private spot, just a couple of minutes embracing each other, sharing a kiss and kind Words
- 2) giving your spouse a bath and massage
- 3) a picnic in the bedroom with only finger foods and your imagination and
- 4) soft, tender touching during Monday night football. You can add a new celebration for touchdowns!

Each person is different but there will be a time and a place when they want love, attention and personal care. So many times, he/she may have even hinted at his/her need for more attention. We all have needs and if we don't find ways to meet them at home,

they may be met elsewhere a situation which has a devastating impact on the relationship. One thing I've figured out is that it is really hard to stay mad at my husband when we are in constant contact through loving touches. Such as holding hands, hugging or sitting and cuddling on the couch. The point is that physical distance or closeness can help you reclaim your marriage. The truth is that there are certain things that make you respond to your mate in loving ways. In order to build up the marriage and not tear it down you have to add love regularly. Sharing romantic encounters with each other will promote healing and strengthen your marriage. Let's pray.

*Prayer:*

Heavenly Father, pour your anointing on our marriage. Allow us to plant the seeds of caring, loving gestures and passionate encounters and help us to harvest a strong intimate marriage. Lord, we know that you created marriage and you are with us in the union. We know that you have given us intimacy to sustain our union and it is one of your gifts of marriage. Lord, we pray that you continue to guide us and speak to us in our spirit so we will invest love in our relationship. Lord, if there is hurt in our hearts that prevents us from giving and receiving the love of our mate, heal us right now. Jesus, you know all the secrets and issues that have plagued our relationship and only you have the cure for us. We ask that you bless our union right now and allow us to move forward creating a love legacy that we can share with others to your glory. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen

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