

Key Truths for Women

Essentials for spiritual growth

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Key Truths for Women:

Essentials for Spiritual Growth

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Dedication

To my grandchildren,
whom I love dearly:

David, Jacquelyn,
Leah, Barbara,
and Sarah.

I hope and pray they
make their lives count
for God.

Preface

ON MAY 8, 2002, my life came to a screeching halt. My husband went Home to be with the Lord, and my marriage of almost forty-five years ended forever. I was devastated! After a few weeks of feeling stunned, I began to ask myself some questions: What is God teaching me through this experience? What do I need to learn? What does God have for me in the future? Little by little my Lord began to help me. I began to feel like joining the human race again; I began to feel as if I could live again and not merely exist.

God helped me change my whole perspective on life; He helped me want to be used by Him in the future. I realized how short life actually is and how only the things done for God really count (even though I'd known this fact most of my life). In the past I had my whole life planned; now I could only trust God to lead me day-by-day and step-by-step.

Although I had started this study before my husband died, I finished it afterwards, writing out of the depths of my heart as a means to encourage myself. I hope it will encourage you as well and will help you develop your spiritual maturity and meet whatever needs you face.

Most of the topics came from my husband's sermons. I took these topics and put them into key words, words that will help you unlock your potential for spiritual growth.

My prayer is that these lessons will instruct you concerning the true meaning of these important words, will move you to respond to their claims, and will propel you to apply them to your life. As a result, you will, I trust, be motivated to make your life count for Christ!

LESSON 1

How to Lower Your Temper[ature]

Key Word: Anger

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

AN ANGRY WIFE placed an ad in a newspaper that read, “Used wedding dress for sale—will trade for a .38 caliber pistol.” We, like that woman, find anger sneaking its way into our lives. Everyone has experienced it and been affected by it.

One person defined anger as a towering giant we never conquer. But anger can be an appropriate response to injustice or sin. However, when it is unchecked or misdirected, it can cause great destruction. Even if we justify our anger, our rationalization does not make it right.

Although anger is ages old, it has become a major problem. The Bible teaches that unresolved anger and resentment are as serious as murder. Anger is the root of many crimes, as well as the cause of family problems and much of the stress we face today.

Anger takes many forms and may unconsciously be hidden as smoldering resentment or covered hurt. Inward anger seems to be the most destructive. Anger takes our focus off God and sets us on a course toward evil.

Anger comes with high costs. It can do more harm to the vessel in which it is *stored* than to the vessel on which it is *poured*. We are never more vulnerable than when we are angry. Anger lowers our self-control and decreases our power of reason, thus causing our common sense to forsake us. As a result, many hurtful words come out of our mouths—words that can damage our mates, our children, and the people we love and respect the most. Whether we vent our anger by silence, rage, or temper tantrums, we use our energy in unproductive, ungodly ways.

I trust that this lesson will first help us perceive anger from God's viewpoint and second help us, by God's grace, to start controlling our anger. May God help us start anew today!

Unlocking the Truths about Anger

What is anger? It is a hostile emotion that brings displeasure either to us or to someone else. People who study anger tell us there are at least five different levels of anger, with each one more intense than the previous one.

⇨ The mildest form of anger is irritation. It is a mild, provoking annoyance.

⇨ The next level is a little more emotional. The cause of our anger at this level hurts our pride and dignity. It makes us want to express anger in some small way. This level is associated with righteous anger.

⇨ The next level of anger is more intense and not only makes us feel that we must express our anger but also that we must avenge our anger.

⇨ As anger intensifies, it becomes furious, uncontrolled, and more violent. It becomes wild rage.

⇨ The last level, in which anger goes unchecked, is the most dangerous. At this level the angry person temporarily loses self-control, possibly even before he or she realizes it.

Now that we have looked at the various levels of anger, let's look at what God says about anger.

The Bible mentions God's anger (for example, Psalm 103:9). But there is a difference between God's anger and the temper tantrums we throw. In the Bible God's anger was not about things relating only to Him. Even when God became angry with Israel and others who opposed Him, it was because He loved them and wanted the best—holiness and obedience—for them. So God directed His anger toward sin, abuse, and ungodliness. God's anger is unselfish; it reflects His commitment to righteousness. We hardly ever become angry about these things; we tend to tolerate them.

Is it possible to have sinless anger? Yes. Most people are surprised to learn that anger can have a righteous effect. When is it okay to be angry? It is okay to be angry when anger is motivated by love; for example, when a sister in Christ is openly and knowingly disobeying the Word of God. This anger is constructive. However, we are not dealing with constructive, righteously motivated anger in this lesson but with anger that results from self-centeredness.

God has set up some clear instructions to help us handle anger.

1. Read Ephesians 4:26. How are we to deal with anger?

One comedian jokingly interpreted this principle as, "Don't go to bed angry; stay up and fight!" However, we must not allow

ourselves the luxury of nursing our anger. When we postpone dealing with it, we lick our wounds and, usually, hurt *only* ourselves. Our anger becomes a grudge that in the end turns into poison and bitterness. It eats away at our emotional well-being. God says that we should not let the problem linger but should solve it by the end of the day. Anger never gets better. The longer we nurse it, the worse it becomes.

Ephesians 4:27 continues the thought of verse 26. The words “give place to the devil” mean to give the Devil an opportunity in our lives.

2. Read Ephesians 4:27. What happens when we hold on to our anger?

When we open our hearts to anger and wrath, we open the door for Satan to move into our lives with things even worse than anger. We can compare anger to wet cement: it’s easy to get into, but you must get out of it before it hardens. When anger hardens, it turns into bitterness. So we need to deal with anger immediately.

In addition to not nursing our anger, we must not rehearse it. Have you ever been around someone who loves to tell you why she is angry? Each time she repeats the story, she drives the hurt and anger deeper into her heart and mind.

3. Read Ephesians 4:29.
 - (a) What are we *not* to let our talk degenerate into?

 - (b) What should our talk do for others?

Don't let anger run unchecked. Don't give the Devil an opportunity to gain a foothold in your life by rehearsing your anger and driving the hurts deeper into your mind and spirit.

We must reverse our anger by redirecting it and refocusing on something else.

4. What should we focus on, according to Ephesians 4:32? Why?

Anger Must Be Controlled

Do you have a temper? Do you control it? Do you (or any of your family members) yell, scream, or slam doors? *Don't sin by letting anger control you.* God wants to help you with this area of weakness. He wants to give you victory over uncontrolled anger.

5. What advice does Psalm 37:8 give us regarding anger?

Proverbs 14:29 deals with the problem of controlling anger. The verse refers to two people with opposite reactions.

6. Based on Proverbs 14:29, summarize what happens in an incident when
 - (a) a person is *slow* to become angry.
 - (b) a person is *quick* to become angry.

Uncontrolled anger causes people to say things they don't realize or mean. They might say such things as, "I hate you!" or "You're stupid." These kinds of words injure and hurt family and friends, and, though they may be forgiven, they still leave scars.

We can control an angry situation by what we say.

7. According to Proverbs 15:1, 2, and 4, how can our speech stir up anger or downplay it?

According to Proverbs 19:11, a person's discretion (wisdom) causes him or her to defer anger, or to exercise patience. It is the person's "glory" (it is honorable) to "pass over" a transgression.

8. (a) What does it mean to "pass over a transgression"?

- (b) Has anyone ever "passed over" one of your transgressions? If so, summarize the event. If not, can you think of a Bible character who "passed over" someone else's transgression?

Venting our anger *does not* make us less angry; it makes us angrier. But controlling anger and patiently overlooking offenses *do* help us become less angry.

9. Proverbs 17:14 likens anger to a reservoir of water that develops a small leak. What does this illustration teach us about anger?

Conquer Anger, or It Will Conquer You

Think of emotional hurts that you know were caused by anger. The people involved could have avoided those hurts if they had allowed the Holy Spirit to dominate their lives.

10. Read Proverbs 19:19.
 - (a) What consequence do angry people face?

 - (b) What happens when someone tries to help an angry person?

The time between an upsetting situation and our reaction to it is a small window of opportunity in which to choose our course of action.

11. Read Proverbs 29:20. What does God say about the person who speaks before thinking?

12. Proverbs 15:18 talks about two kinds of people.
(a) Who are these people?

(b) How does each respond to life?

You can either conquer your anger by quickly thinking how to handle the situation in a wise fashion (with a brief prayer to God), or you can do what comes naturally: get mad and tell someone off. We could liken this choice to having a fire and two buckets—one filled with water and the other with gasoline. Throw water on the fire, and it's doused. Throw gasoline on it, and it grows. When strife starts, we can throw either water (a patient, calm response) or gasoline (an angry response) on the situation. "Water" will cool it down; "gasoline" will fuel it up. It is a good idea to ask for God's wisdom to help you say what would please Him. *A quick prayer will help you keep your anger under control.*

13. Read Proverbs 22:24 and 25. To keep from becoming angry people, what do we need to avoid?

14. Our Savior set the example for conquering anger. What did He encourage us to be in Matthew 5:9?

Key Actions

People who say they cannot control their anger are kidding themselves. For instance, did you ever hear two people (perhaps one of them was you) in an angry argument, when suddenly the phone rang. One of them answered the phone—using a calm, polite voice. If that person could control her anger when answering the phone, she certainly could have controlled it in the previous conversation.

How do you control your anger? And who taught you to respond this way? Do you take responsibility for your anger, or do you blame it on someone else? No one can make you angry; you have to allow the person to do so.

15. Answer the following two questions.

(a) What two kinds of people does Proverbs 12:16 mention?

(b) How do they differ when it comes to anger?

16. Read James 1:19 and 20.

(a) Based on James 1:19, what three things should we be when we face situations that anger us?

Be _____ to _____.

Be _____ to _____.

Be _____ to _____.

(b) According to James 1:20, why should we *be* these things?

Do you recognize unrighteous anger and realize that it displeases God? Are you experiencing more anger than you had realized? Are you holding on to your anger, or are you making sure it is solved by the end of the day (or sooner)?

17. Read Ecclesiastes 7:9. What did Solomon, the wisest man, say about hasty anger?

18. Read Romans 12:17–21. How do you think a Christian woman would act if she were obeying these verses (especially in reference to the revenge side of anger)?

19. Romans 12:19–21 tells us how to handle angry situations. What specific counsel does verse 21 give us?

20. How do you see yourself putting Romans 12:19–21 into action?

Locking God's Truths into Our Hearts

- 🔑 *Don't dwell on anger; deal with it.* Has anger ever affected you physically? Most people would have to answer yes. Anger can increase our blood pressure and make our hearts beat faster. How has it affected you? How has it affected someone you know?

- 🔑 *Seek to experience some solitude; then try to think about the situations you are facing.* Ask God to help you think before you speak in anger when you face a crisis. Ask God to help you control your anger.

- 🔑 *Don't give the Devil victory by constantly talking about things that anger you and keeping them fresh in your mind.* Reinforcement will make you bitter. Learn to tell your problems to God, not others.

- 🔑 *List some Scriptures that you can claim to help you face situations that make you angry—perhaps some that were mentioned in this lesson.* Start memorizing some of these verses, and recall them when you are tempted to become angry.

- 🔑 *Don't be a burden of ungodly emotions to others or grieve the Holy Spirit by being an angry person.* Are you expecting God to help you with the problem of anger? Do you want His help? Don't focus on yourself but on helping others.

- 🔑 *Let God fight your battles for you.* One of the most encouraging Scriptures on handling anger and letting God deal with people who upset us is 2 Chronicles 20:15.

God told King Jehoshaphat, "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." This is a good Scripture verse to turn to when you are tempted to become angry. The battle is not yours; it is the Lord's.

🔑 *Take the counsel in Hebrews 10:24 of helping others to grow spiritually.* What are some specific ways you could help others?