

# THE COUNSELOR

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Cindy couldn't take it any more. Her boss constantly demeaned her. She was nice to him. Cindy broke down today and exploded on him with all kinds of vulgarities. She felt terrible afterwards. People call Bill a "hothead." He radiates anger every where he goes. He is mean. Bill grumbles in the grocery store check-out line, the movie theater, and the doctor's office. Last week the police handcuffed Bill and took him to jail after a road rage incident. He ran a person off the road who accidentally pulled in front of him. Sam lost his temper last night with his five year-old daughter, Becky. He yelled at her for dropping her plate at the dinner table. She left the room in tears - another family dinner was ruined. Paul is a meticulous, mild-mannered guy who seems friendly, but is seething with anger on the inside. He does not handle frustrations well. You wouldn't know it by his actions, but he is consumed with anger. He is constantly preoccupied with violence, thinks negative self-defeating thoughts, and is depressed. He has an ulcer too.

Anger is a complex subject. There are many definitions, expressions, types, sources, and causes of anger. The few scenarios described above happen every day all over the world. Some people say that anger is not bad and should be expressed, while others think anger is a destructive force that should be avoided at all costs. Counseling offices, prisons, divorce courts, pastors' offices, psychiatric hospitals, and juvenile detention centers are filled with angry people. Anger is the number one cause of damaged marriages, abused children, and violence in the home, school, and workplace. Anger is an emotional response which usually results from a frustration or blocked need. It can be explosive or expressed more subtly as in irritability and cynicism. Anger may act as an alarm, especially when someone pushes your "button" of guilt, or pain from unresolved hurts.

## ANGER



### *"I'm mad too Eddie!"*

I remember the bumper stickers several years ago that said "I'm mad too Eddie." Everyone rallied for Eddie. We live in an angry society. People are ready to unload. Unfortunately, many people today struggle with anger. They have issues. Unresolved anger can lead to serious problems. People murder in fits of rage. Anger can lead to health problems. Some people erupt like volcanoes, while others are like smoldering fires with their anger, hot and ready to ignite. We really have a problem when we have a whole society with anger issues! So many people are just waiting to jump on the "bandwagon" over some issue or situation. They are ready to be "mad too Eddie." Sometimes it's easier to be angry than to feel the pain or work through problems. Most people do not have lingering, unresolved anger. Many people do. Anger is a normal reaction when you have been attacked, or threatened, especially by terrorists. I am not referring to that type of anger.

### *The Problem with Anger*

There are different types of anger. People get mad for different reasons. Sources of anger include: feelings of helplessness or powerlessness in having certain goals or desires thwarted; when a person does not experience love; when there is harshness in relationships; fear as the base of anger; violation of a covenant, and low self-esteem.

Anger doesn't just happen. Certain thoughts and perceptions precede angry outbursts. The same situation may affect two people differently. The difference lies in their interpretation of perceived threat, loss, or injury. For example, I may not be bothered by someone interrupting my conversation with John, but Fred may feel totally violated and considerably annoyed. Fred gets angry and responds rudely. He may have a family history of interruptions and patterns of retaliation. Fred's tolerance level is much less than mine. Fred

could have some unresolved anger related to feeling controlled. Anger is good when it is expressed appropriately and motivates people to resolve problems. Anger expressed negatively, harshly, or violently is bad. This type of anger creates more problems than solutions. Trust may be reduced or lost. Personal effectiveness is diminished and relationships with others are damaged or destroyed. Anger in the work place can lead to strained relationships lowered productivity, and sometimes violence. Inappropriate, uncontrolled, or repressed anger can generate serious problems physically, mentally, and spiritually. Resentment and anger dims our spiritual vision. Anger can turn to a depressed, defeated spirit. Anger can give Satan a foothold, especially with unforgiveness (II Cor. 2:10-11). Anger can hinder prayer (I Tim. 2:8). Anger can also numb or block us from experiencing God's love. It hinders our relationship with God. Sinful anger controls us and hurts others. Anger becomes destructive when we hold grudges or resentments toward people. It occurs when we harbor unforgiveness. Sinful anger is self-righteous as opposed to Godly righteous anger.

### *Healthy Anger*

Healthy anger occurs when a person uses their anger to settle matters productively. Assertive people look for alternatives. Assertive anger helps others. It cares about the other person. It values forgiveness. Aggressive anger punish-

es others, it's demanding, judgmental, and condemning. Aggressive anger usually has high expectations of people, is self-centered, and fails to see it's own weakness. Assertive people use their anger to accomplish a positive outcome. It is anger without "an attitude".

Healthy anger builds people up, restores trust, and solves problems. Healthy anger does no harm, it glorifies God.

## Resolution

Resolution involves working through anger issues. It goes beyond anger management. Resolution deals with root causes of anger. Unresolved hurts can predispose people to have problems with anger. They react angrily to frustrations. Resolution enables people to move beyond their pain and hurts. Anger resolution provides understanding and healing. Some people inherit anger from their parents. Bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, and critical demeanor gets passed on from one genera-

tion to the next. Some are addicted to anger. They are hooked on the adrenaline rush they experience when they go into rage. Deep healing and resolution from unresolved hurts comes from Christ. Counseling centered on Him enables people to work through their hurts, move toward forgiveness, grieve, heal, and let go. Complete resolution involves forgiving the other person and yourself 100%. True forgiveness is supernatural – without God it is impossible to really forgive.

## Biblical Anger

Jesus cleared the temple (Luke 19:45-46). He was angry because the people were selling in a place of worship. This is righteous anger. He was mad because the people violated a covenant with God. The Bible is clear about anger. We are to be angry but not sin (Ephes. 4:26). We are also supposed to resolve anger before the day is done. "Don't let the sun go down on your anger." (Ephes. 4:31-32). God's Word says allot about sin and blowing up.

Proverbs are full of statements illustrating the consequences of uncontrolled anger (Prov. 14:29, 15:18, 19:19, 25:28, 29:11, 29:22). We are warned against associating with people given to anger, that we may become like them (Prov. 22:24,25). We are encouraged to restrain our anger, to overlook offenses (Prov. 19:11). James reminds us to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger (James 1:19, 20). Biblical anger does not harm, it states the injustice and restores relationships. The ultimate goal is resolution and reconciliation.

## Freedom

Bad things happen all the time. We will never be totally free from anger-provoking situations in this life. People will lie, cheat, disappoint, frustrate and inconvenience us. We will get angry. Do we let our anger control us? Anger is a choice (LaHaye/Phillips 1982). We don't have to live in bondage to anger and unforgiveness. We can seek God for His help in handling troubling situations. His way works! Lay your troubles before God. Freedom and peace in Christ come when we surrender our anger to Him. Freedom from anger comes when we forgive as we have been forgiven by Christ. Let God help you with the process of forgiveness. You don't have to carry the anger. The more we see others through God's eyes, by abiding in Him, the more free we are to love. This is how we keep the sun from going down on our anger. This is freedom!

## Management

It's impossible to live this life without getting angry over someone or something. Everyone gets angry from time to time. There are ways to manage anger.

1. Admit anger. Don't deny it. Face it. Avoid an angry mindset.
2. Express it calmly. Get your point across. Do not explode. React slowly.
3. Look for the triggers. Watch for those things that upset you.
4. Deal with anger before you get angry.
5. Get more information before you respond.
6. Become aware of displaced anger.
7. Evaluate your angry feelings. Consider the sources of your anger.
8. Remember anger is a choice. You make you angry. It's your response.
9. Diffuse the time bomb of anger.
10. Don't put off expressing what you feel for long periods of time.
11. Do not withdraw into silence.
12. Be open to criticism.
13. Deal with your anger verbally.
14. Learn to discipline your mind.
15. Learn to express your expectations verbally.
16. Learn self-control.
17. Walk away, cool down, come back later.
18. Don't accuse or attack the other person. Use I statements.
19. Attack the problem not the person. Be solution oriented.
20. Redirect anger from within toward the problem.
21. Learn to hold your temper, be slow to anger. Count to 50.
22. State your hurt or complaints as objectively as possible.
23. After you recognize and admit you are angry, you must decide to change.
24. Focus on humility, confession, and forgiveness.
25. Remind yourself that God is in control.
26. Ask yourself, what would Jesus do?
27. Plan ahead. Control the tongue (James 3:2-18). Choose how you will respond.
28. Consider seeking counsel from a wise friend, pastor, or counselor.
29. Be honest about how you feel
30. Rebuke in love. For a loving purpose. In a loving manner.
31. Seek the help of God in prayer the moment of temptation.
32. Monitor feelings, thoughts, reactions. Seek to live a Godly life.
33. You can choose to say no to angry feelings. This cannot be done on your own.
34. Jesus must be a controlling force in your life (Charles Stanley, 1997).

Angry reactions can be prevented too. Make decisions in advance about how you will handle certain situations coming up that could make you angry. Relax, weigh the consequences. Avoid anger arousing situations. Learn to confront in love.



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## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

**INFO: 713.984.1314**

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