

Appendix E

Parenting Tips & Family Devotions

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Things for Parents to Remember

We all want our children to “do what we say more than do what we do”. This is especially true when it comes to expressing anger. As you have learned in this seminar, anger is an emotion that reveals a ruling desire or heart problem that is occurring. This is as true for our children as it is for us as their parents.

However, children, depending on their age, cannot necessarily be aware of the underlying desire, but you can help by teaching them to identify those desires in themselves. This is a large part of what it means to disciple your children. It is not just about putting The Word into your child’s world, but also about helping your child to put his/her world into words (that emanate from a biblical foundation and Gospel-dependence).

As you teach your children you have learned about anger here are 8 key points to keep in mind.

1. **Love your child unconditionally.** This may seem unnecessary to say, but it is something we need to keep at the forefront of our mind when talking about anger in children, and how to help them with anger. Children act out behaviorally most of the time. Their behaviors can be triggers for our own anger, but remember that children rarely verbalize their thoughts and feelings before acting on them.

Verbalizing (which involves self-awareness, humility, and trust) before acting is a skill they have to be taught and is a key part of their discipleship (the cultivation of patience and self-control, Galatians 5:22-23). Some practical suggestions on how to express unconditional love are: make eye contact with them when they speak, give physical and verbal affection frequently and appropriately, and plan quality time to spend with them.

2. **Remember where your children are developmentally.** Learn to speak age appropriately to your children. This involves the words you speak, the duration of instructive conversations, and the amount of interaction (monologues are almost always ineffective). Development, broken down simply, can be put in three categories; birth to age five; 6 to 12 years; and 13 and above.
 - The primary objectives from birth to 5 years are safety and security, feeling a part of the family, and creating identity. Without safety and security anger makes sense as a necessary means of self-protection. Does your home lay the foundation for a healthy expression of anger?
 - From 6 to 12 years the focus is on character development. Children during this age are forming desires both good and bad. Parents should observe their children and teach them what those desires are, and how to bring them under the authority of Christ.
 - Typically, after the age of 12, the child moves to internalizing things for themselves. At this age, we want to see children begin to make choices and handle consequences more and more on their own. The beginning of internalization of values begins to take shape, and it is important to be aware of where their values are coming from.
3. **Do not make your child’s anger as complicated as your own anger.** Identifying underlying desires in your child can be easier to identify than your own. Start with the desires for safety, control, and acceptance. Most of the time, these three things are what our children crave most. Our children have not developed the complicated mechanisms we have to hide or express anger.
4. **Do not discipline in anger.** Again, this may sound like common sense, but many parents see an action in their child they do not like, and choose to react. Instead parents should step back, identify the desire motivating their child’s behavior (and their own response of anger), and work the plan. Make it a priority to stop and think through habits of discipline. Make decisions, as much as you can beforehand, on how you will handle behaviors and address heart issues.



We cannot expect our children to handle their anger with more maturity than the adults God has placed over them for protection, instruction, and example.

5. **Model repentance and forgiveness.** There will be times when it is appropriate to ask your child for forgiveness, as well as respond to their request for forgiveness. It seems unnatural to humble oneself before a child but can serve as a reminder of the Gospel, and the humility that Christ demonstrated through the incarnation and crucifixion.
6. **Praise your children for handling their feelings appropriately.** Recognizing maturity and progress in our children perpetuates their continual growth. Maturity will not mean perfection. It is wise and good to affirm incremental progress even if there are still areas of improvement. If you only recognize the instances when they fail, it becomes discouraging and the focus becomes negative.
7. **Pray for your child's salvation.** It is easy to forget that as much as you need the Gospel and God's help in overcoming anger, your child needs Christ's intervening help. It is easy to assume that a child's battle with sin is "easy" because they are young. If your child has not accepted salvation, then true help and healing will not take place outside of it. This does not mean we stop parenting until they do, only that we continue to speak truth, model good behavior, discipline in a way that balances grace and truth, and pray for their eyes to be opened.
8. **Never stop teaching, modeling, and proclaiming the Gospel to your family.** It is our only hope and source of power. The more we recognize our dependence on Christ and need for His salvation, the more our children will. If we live Gospel-centered lives, our children will be encouraged to do so as well.

Family Devotions & Parenting Tips

Chapter One

Learning to ADMIT my anger is anger and that it is mine.

Devotion for Proverbs 19:19. Ask your children to come up with things that make them angry. If they find it difficult, think of things you have seen your children get angry about and mention those. (Ex. Not being able to go outside, not being able to play video games, sibling taking something that was theirs, parents schedule overriding their agenda, being left out by friends, sporting events...)

Help your children identify the ways they respond when these things happen (pout, yell, whine, throw toys, walk away, etc...).

Help your child identify effective ways to express feelings that are appropriate. When your child begins to pout, yell, or whine, stop your child in the middle of these actions and calmly say, "I can see you are angry right now, what are you angry about?" Try to get them to verbalize what they are feeling. If they can't, offer suggestions. Teach them to say, "I am mad that I don't get to go over to my friend's house, or I am mad that I can't play longer." Maybe they are scared about something, or worried. At this point, express that those things can be disappointing, fearful, or worrisome but the next time things like that happen, you would like for them to be able to express it by saying, "Dad/Mom, I really want to play longer, but know that you told me I couldn't. This makes me angry." If your child can do this, they are on their way to being able to handle their anger appropriately.

If your child is so angry they cannot calm down, then you go with them on a walk or some other physical activity to get out excess energy, if they don't want to do something physical then give them the opportunity to calm down on their own by time in their room alone, or sitting and reading. Once they have calmed down to the point of being able to have a conversation then walk them through what got them angry, their underlying desire, how you would like to see them handle things, etc...

This is an opportunity to point out not only times when you see your child getting angry, but also times that they could have reacted in anger but didn't or did get angry but expressed their upset with self-control. It may also be appropriate for you to share your own struggle with anger, things you get angry about, and ways you handle your anger. Explain Proverbs 19:19 to your family.



Devotion for James 1:19-21. Get a deck of cards. On the first attempt to build a “house of cards” tell the kids you are going to have a race to see who can build a three level house first. Let them rush and fail a few times. Read the key passage. Explain that our anger is often like this activity. Anger rushes things and does not allow us to accomplish good things. It is only when we trust God and others He has placed in authority that we will see the good things He intends for our lives accomplished. Make a second attempt to build the house of cards this time emphasizing trust and patience. Take a picture of your house of cards, put it on the refrigerator, and post these verses below it. See the blog post “Anger is a Rushed Emotion” at bradhambrick.com for more ideas to illustrate this aspect of anger.

Chapter Two

Humbly **ACKNOWLEDGING** the breadth and impact of my anger problem.

Devotion for Luke 6:43-45. Give your children a visual of the key teaching in this passage. Take a glass of water and shake it. When water comes out, ask, “Why did water come out of the glass?” Most likely they will answer, “Because you shook it.” Kindly say, “No,” and repeat the question emphasizing the word water. After a couple tries tell them, “Water came out of the glass because water was in the glass. If it were a glass of milk and I shook it milk would have come out.”

Our hearts are like that glass. When life shakes us the content of our heart is revealed. We cannot blame our sinful actions on the things that happen outside of us. “You cannot blame your brother taking your toy for why you hit him anymore than I should blame your disobedience for why I yell at you. In those situations you wanted to enjoy the toy more than to love your brother and I let my desire for a peaceful evening override my responsibility to honor you.”

Use this conversation as another opportunity to present the Gospel to your child. Christ comes to change hearts. He wants to keep their hearts and minds healthy. Only Jesus can change our hearts. Talk about how you still need the Gospel even as a Christian parent.

Follow Up Study: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones – “God Sends Help” starting on page 326.

Chapter Three

Beginning to **UNDERSTAND** the origin, motive, and history of my anger.

Parenting Reflection: Review pages 22-23 in this anger seminar notebook and reflect on the life of your child. Consider their personality, temperament, family history, and current life situation. By evaluating where your child is in each area you will have a better understanding of how to help your child.

Part of your role as a parent is captured in Proverbs 20:5, “The purpose in a man’s heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” You are a “person of understanding” in your child’s world. It is your responsibility to help them understand their ruling desires and the influences that contribute to those desires.

Parenting Tip: When your child enjoys something new or makes a new friend ask, “What made that fun for you?” Help them put into words the desires that drive during good times and celebrate them when they are expressed healthily, so that desire does not become a guilt word/concept in your home.

Chapter Four

Recognizing my need to **REPENT** to God for my anger

It is important to teach what repentance means whether your child has recognized their need to repent and embrace Christ as Savior yet or not. We cannot make our children repent (ultimately for salvation or temporally for a given sin) anymore than someone could make us.

“Repent” means to change direction. Acknowledging God’s Lordship (to commit to go “God’s way”) is central in repentance. What does this look like for a child? Remember children reflect what is modeled, and learn through observation. So as we model repentance as turning back to God’s lordship, and not letting anger rule, we can better help our children understand this.



Younger children have a less difficult time understanding Lordship than older children and adults because much of their lives are lived under some authority. So, it is not surprising to them that God wants to be Lord as well. It is the explanation of why He deserves it that will be central.

This leads us back to the Gospel. God created them, knows them better, and loves them more passionately than anyone. It is very important to teach our children that God's desire for Lordship is out love for them, not a need He is trying to fulfill in Himself. It is equally important that we root our expectations of our children in love for them and not in trying to get our children to fulfill some need in us.

Devotion from Acts 3:19-20. Show your children a scar you have or an infected cut (you might also use the internet or a first aid book). Explain how not properly cleaning a cut results in scarring or infection. Then read Acts 3:19-20. Explain that repentance is not meant to be a form of punishment. Jesus has already taken our punishment. That is why we get to repent. Repentance is how God cleanses the injury of our sin so that it does not leave a scar on our character. When we understand repentance rightly (even though it may sting a little) it become a time of refreshing rather than a time of dread.

Parenting Evaluation: How well do you model God's response to your repentance when your children repent to you? If we are ever going to overcome anger (or any other sin) repentance must be associated with relational restoration or we will avoid it and the "infection" will get worse.

Follow Up Study: *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones -- "A New Way to See" starting on page 334 tells the story of Saul and shows the dramatic repentance he had.

Chapter Five Accepting the Necessity to **CONFESS** to those Affected

Confession is very hard for most people. As chapter five points out, anger is the exact opposite of confession and goes in contrast to what was trying to be achieved in the first place. Anger wants its way, confession is submitting to the way of Christ.

The steps outlined in chapter five from *Peacekeeping for Families* should be taught and modeled with children. When your child has hurt someone with their anger, walk your child through these steps.

1. Teach your child to **address everyone involved**. If he lost his temper at a sporting event, then the whole team. If at school, then to those teachers or classmates who were affected. If at home, then to all family members involved. Remember, you must be willing to model this as well.
2. Teach your child **the vocabulary of repentance**. Sit down with your child and plan out what they should say. Teach your child how to own his anger, and help him or her recognize it was God they wronged first and then the other person.
3. Teach your child to **name specifically** what they did. At this point in the process, your tone should be instructive rather than corrective. If not, then the affect will likely be shaming your child rather than helping them grow in godliness.
4. Teach your child to **apologize**. A good question to ask your child is How do you think (name of people offended) felt when (name their action) happened? Most times when you ask children this question they will get defensive. Don't get defensive back, calmly say, "I am trying to help you see from other people's perspective." Teaching empathy in children is a necessary task in helping children develop character and is key in making a genuine apology.
5. Teach your child how to **accept the consequences**. This may be an appropriate time for self disclosure for times that you had to accept consequence that were hard to bear. Do not be afraid to let your children feel appropriate guilt (which is different from shame) and emotions surrounding their behaviors. Do not rescue them from feeling badly; show them how to repent (turn from their actions) so they don't feel this way again.
6. Teach you children how they should have **handled their feelings differently**. If we always tell our children don't, no, stop, etc... how are they to know what is appropriate? Take the time when you tell them not to do something, the



acceptable way to do it as well. It is often good to role play appropriate responses so that your child knows what it sounds and feels like to respond in a God-honoring fashion.

7. **Ask for forgiveness and allow time.** If children are confessing to other children, you will find not much time is needed. Children can be really forgiving and quick to reconcile relationships. It is adults that can take longer. Be quick to restore relationship with your child when they need your forgiveness. This does not mean a removal of consequences necessarily, but it does mean you as their parent can walk through those consequences with them and encourage them through it.

It is important to teach children this process, and it takes a lot more time than saying, “Go apologize to your sister”, and them saying, “I’m sorry”. You are trying to instill a way of thinking about their actions and how it violates God’s desire for them and others.

Devotion from Matthew 7:1-5. Get three pairs of glasses. On one pair completely cover the lenses so no one can see out. On the second pair, use reading glasses or sunglasses where it is difficult to see, but still possible with struggle. Have your child put on each pair and ask them to try and take a third pair of glasses off another person. After they have tried to do it with the difficult pairs, ask them to do it with nothing on their eyes. This is an example of how confession frees us to see things as they should be and not only sin in another’s life but also from their perspective. When we have anger it is hard to be empathetic.

Chapter Six

RESTRUCTURE LIFE to rely on the Gospel for heart change expressed in action

Parenting lasts a lifetime. It will look different at different ages, but you never stop being a parent. As you work on steps six through nine for yourself, they will flesh themselves out in your family. This will bring your family alongside you in your plan, and everyone will reap the benefits. God never finishes working on our character. The process of sanctification will never be complete this side of eternity. So steps six through nine lead parents back to praying for their children’s salvation first and foremost. Once your children are saved, rejoice that God has entrusted you to be involved in part of their process of sanctification.

Devotion from Ephesians 4:29-32. Get some children’s building materials (Lego’s, tinker toys, etc...). Make a list of the good and bad things that the family has said to one another over the last week. Take a few minutes to build a house with the toys. Then as you read from the list of phrases ask the children to add or take away pieces based upon whether the words “built up” or “tore down” the house.

Afterwards spend some time playing with your kids and making the house bigger while talking about the kind of things the family should more often to build one another up. You might chose to leave the final product on display for a while. When “little brother” tears it up it may make for another teachable moment of all that has been learned up until this point.

Follow Up Study: *Tale of the Poisonous Yuck Bugs: Based on Proverbs 12:18* by Aaron Reynolds does an excellent of job illustrating the point of Ephesians 4:29 in a playful Dr. Seuss style book.

Chapter Seven

Gaining the flexibility and humility necessary to IMPLEMENT my plan

Devotion from Luke 6:27-31. Gather supplies to make a sandwich. This devotion may be good to do before dinner. Ask your children, “When do we make food?” The answer you are looking for is, “When we’re hungry.” If your kids are old enough to understand you might make a joke about how much more you spend when you go the grocery hungry.

Just like food in most relevant when we are hungry, self-control is most relevant when we have an enemy and patience is most relevant when something is irritating. This is why Jesus commands us to love our enemies (when we’re angry everyone starts to feels like our enemy) and went into so much detail to describe what it looks like.



Walk through the last several times when your child struggled with anger and talk about what it would mean for them to “love their enemy.” Give examples from your life of how you loved someone you thought was against you. This is another important time to emphasize how we rely on God to give us the love for others we do not naturally have. It is also a time to picture the Gospel that God loved us when we were hurting and offending Him.

Chapter Eight **Recognizing that change requires PERSEVERING over a lifetime**

Devotion from 2 Timothy 2:24-25. Pick your children’s favorite role playing game. At my house, that would be “playing puppy.” Chose something that must be done (giving puppy a bath) and takes turns playing different roles within the game. Make sure you have fun with it as you play. The point that we want our children to see is that they naturally associate different behaviors and attitudes with different roles.

Side Note: If you act the family of puppies, you will probably learn a lot about your family dynamics in this exercise as you see your children act out the roles they learned from your home.

This was Paul’s point in 2 Timothy 2. If you truly view yourself as “The Lord’s servant (v. 24),” then you will respond differently to life situations. Being a Christian should change your identity and through that changed identity change your behavior. The ultimate key to controlling anger is to serve God rather than serve self.

You can also play the game backwards. Pick several life roles (i.e., teacher, librarian, police officer, coach) and act out the role. Have your child guess what you are. Allow them to pick a role and do the same. The same point can be made – our actions reveal who we are.

Chapter Nine **Accepting the call to STEWARD all my life for God’s glory**

Devotion from James 3:16-18. While coloring a picture (see below) ask your child, “What is the opposite of anger?” You might warm them up with easier questions about the opposite of sad (happy), dark (light), or low (high). James 3:17 tells us that the opposite of angry is wise.

Get two identical coloring pages. Use a red crayon to color one and a blue crayon to color the other. Point out that the same picture looks very different based upon the color we use. James 3:18 says that the same life will look very different based on whether it is marked by anger or wisdom.

Our goal as we have studied anger together has been to allow more and more of our life to be colored by God’s wisdom so that our life looks like what He intended it to be. We should always remember that God does have a plan for our life and that our life is most enjoyable when we allow Him color our lives by loving Jesus and obeying the Bible.

When To Seek Professional Help for Your Child:

There are many times that problems start and parents struggle with knowing if what their child is experiencing is “normal behavior,” or if professional help is needed. The following questions are meant to guide parents in knowing what to do.

1. How much of daily, weekly, monthly life is effected? How often do you feel like you are dealing you’re your child’s anger? What is the intensity and duration of your child’s anger? What are the triggers that you can identify? Hunger, sleep, attention?
2. How long has this been going on? (anything over six months is significant)



3. Have the behaviors gotten worse over time? Has pouting moved to whining, to yelling, to throwing things? Have behaviors moved from happening just at home to now school and home?
4. Has any traumatic event taken place to cause the behavior? Has anyone recently died, moved, other changes or things happened to the child?
5. Have the parenting attempts you have taken so far made things better or worse or no change?
6. Do you feel tense or frustrated in dealing with my child's behavior?

If most of the responses to these questions were negative then a first step would be discussing your child's behavior with your pediatrician and getting appropriate guidance about next steps to take.