

Anger/Self Control

Tita: Well, I've had enough!... I'm *tired* of asking for help and *nobody* in this family helps me! Aghhh... you all make me so angry! ...How many times do I have to ask you to help me take the garbage out on Thursday nights?... Now it's too late, the truck has gone past and we've missed it! Thank you for *not* helping me!"

Hello...welcome to *Women of Hope*, I'm Tammy. And we've just heard someone who sounds really angry. Do you sometimes feel angry? I know I do. I think we all do at one time or another. What about you Carol?

Carol: Oh yes – of course I've been angry...it's only natural sometimes when we get frustrated about something.

Hello...it's good to be with you again today. I can understand completely why Tita sounded so angry, can you? The garbage truck had gone and now it was going to be a whole week before that garbage could be collected. And by then the can would be overflowing and soooo smelly!

Tammy: Welcome Tita! It's good to have you back with us again. I believe you've come today to talk to us about anger!

Tita: Yes... Have you ever shouted at someone or said things out of anger and frustration? ... Well I have a confession to make, I said those words to my family this morning...but to be very honest, I've said the same thing *over and over* many times in the past...and *still* nobody helps with the garbage... Aghh...having to always ask them to do this...it makes me so angry I could scream!!

But...I'm sure *you* would know as *I* do...that screaming in anger does not seem to make *any* difference. So what else could I do? Maybe if I started throwing things around...or stopped talking to them...they'd realize they made me angry. Maybe I should stop cooking for them...or even better when they ask *me* to do something for *them*: I won't do it. *That* will teach them a lesson!

Carol: Well, Tita I doubt you would you really do those things because we all know that wouldn't help would it?

Tita: Well...NO! I'm happy to tell you that I would *not* do *any* of those things. I've learned through almost 50 years of my life that anger is a natural human emotion. It can be *very powerful* and what we *do*...or *don't* do when we're angry is *very* important.

Tammy: That's so true Tita. Tammy tells the story about her daughter's anger issues when she had car troubles and took her car to the mechanic. ("I'm not upset. Upset means I go home and cry. I am angry. And angry goes out and buys a new car!")

Carol: Respond...to what Tammy said about anger

So Tita tell us more...

Tita: Ok... I'm one of 3 sisters...with a brother 10 years younger, so growing up I related mostly to my sisters. Now I'm the middle one...

Tammy: ...Oh I see – not the oldest who's meant to be responsible...or the youngest who can do anything without getting into trouble!...

Carol: ...but the middle one. I can understand that – I was in the middle too! And it's sometimes a hard place to be in a family!

Tita: Yes it is. If we had an argument, the other two would immediately gang up together and support each other and I was left on my own to defend myself.

Often I felt that they were being unfair, so I would get *very, very angry* and shout and say nasty things to them. To get my revenge on them, I would not allow them to borrow something of mine.

I struggled because I had a very strong temper and found it hard to control. I wonder if you know how I felt? It's not easy when you have a strong temper is it?

Carol and/or Tammy: ...No it's not! I recall all too well that the one response I always had as a teenager to times when I was angry was to go to my room and slam the door.

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope* we're talking about anger. Tita has just been telling us how as the middle of three sisters, she struggled with her temper when she was young...

Tita: As I grew older I wanted to be better behaved. So I would promise myself that next time I felt angry I would keep quiet...I would not shout back or say anything nasty. I managed to control myself *sometimes!* But...often, before I even thought about it I had already exploded and said or done something unkind...which of course only made my sisters want to fight more!

Well of course this behavior earned me a nickname...my family began to call me 'the grouch' or 'grumpy'...which made me even *more* angry! Aghh.... I could not win!

I hated this, I wanted to *not* respond in anger and although I tried, I failed most of the time. And every time I exploded in anger I would then feel guilty and ashamed of myself.

Have you ever struggled with anger? Do you ever express anger and afterwards feel guilty?

Well, as I said, I've learned many lessons throughout the journey of my life, and I'm sure you have too.

One of the most valuable ones is that *if we don't learn to control anger, anger will control us...*and anger out of control can cause a lot of damage.

Carol: Tita, what you just said is really important – I want to say it again... *if we don't learn to control anger, anger will control us...*and anger out of control can cause a lot of damage.

Tita: Well...imagine a wooden plank. Imagine you have a bunch of nails in one hand and a hammer in the other...

Every time you do something in anger, it's as if you've taken a nail and hammered it into the wood. Every time we get out of control and angry we hammer one more nail into the wood.

You may be thinking: 'What does she mean? I don't hammer a nail into wood every time I get angry!' No – this is a picture to help us understand what I'm about to say. Just imagine now going to the person you hurt with your anger and asking them to forgive you because you recognize that you were wrong...it's as if you were removing one of those nails. Can you see the picture? In your mind you have taken out a nail... but see the wood...? There's a hole where the nail was.

That's what happens when our anger is out of control. We can go back and apologize but we have already caused damage to the other person.

Carol: That's a very good picture Tita. It really helps us to understand that when we become angry and say something hurtful it's just as if they are the plank, and we've hammered a hole in their heart. And when we say we are sorry, we remove the nail – but the hole is still there. They've been hurt by our words or our behavior. We can't take back what we said...or did...even if we say "I'm sorry."

Tita: That's just right Carol...this illustration has been very powerful in my life. Now that I understand what anger can do when I don't control it, I do not want to cause damage and hurt to other people. When I came to realize this I felt even more guilty! How many holes had I hammered into other people's hearts? Could I ever do something to repair the damage or hurt I'd caused?

Tammy: You're with us on *Women of Hope*. Tita just asked a very important question: "Could I ever do something to repair the damage or hurt I'd caused to another person when I acted in anger towards them?"

Tita: The picture of the nails and wood stuck in my mind. I did *not* want to keep hurting people through my uncontrolled anger. So I tried even harder to not let anger control me. Well...sometimes I would succeed...but many times I would still get angry and act badly towards others. I began to feel defeated and a failure.

Some time later, I learned about God's love for me, and how Jesus gave his life for me...and I became a believer in Jesus. I began to read God's word, the Bible so I could learn more about him. One day when I was reading my Bible, I read this: "No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway" (Rom 7: 18b-19 NLT).

"Wow," I thought! "Who is the person writing this? How does he know me? He is talking about me! That's *exactly* how I feel!"

I went to talk to a close friend who had been a believer for a long time. She explained to me that the person who had written this was a man called Paul. He had been a follower of Jesus and he was writing this because all of us human beings battle the same problem.

She showed me another part of God's word that said: "But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it, the sin within me is doing it." (Romans 7:20 NLT)

"Tita," my friend said, "what you are experiencing is normal to *all* people. All of us have a human nature that likes to do things our own way. But often our human ways are not pleasing to God. This is what is called *sin*. You are struggling with anger because your human nature wants to respond in ways that make you feel good."

(By the way, let me stop here for a moment and ask you something...have you ever been angry with someone and you felt *good* when you shouted at them? Sometimes I felt bad – but sometimes I felt good. I felt that I was right and the other person deserved to be shouted at. At the time it felt *good, really good!*)

"But I don't feel good anymore." I said to her. "Now when I lose my temper I feel terrible. I try to do what is right and I fail and so I feel guilty and horrible."

My friend gave me a good answer. She said: "Ah, that's because now that you are a follower of Jesus, the spirit of God lives in you. He is *in* you to *help* you. The good news is that you don't have to continue feeling bad. The Holy Spirit is showing you that this behavior is not good or pleasing to God. He does not want you to feel guilty; but he wants you to be aware that you've done something wrong."

Then my friend gently told me what I needed to do. She said: "Once you realize you've hurt someone...talk to God about it. Tell him that you're sorry and then go to the person you hurt. Tell *them* you're sorry *too* and ask for their forgiveness."

"And Tita, there is more good news! ...Now that God's spirit is part of your life he gives you his *own* power in your spirit to say NO to wrong behaviour. But beware! This is not like a magic trick. You now have God's power to help you to live right. But you still have to *choose* to *use* his power to control your emotions...at the exact moment when you feel anger building up in you."

“So you’re telling me that if I choose to behave differently, no matter how hard it may seem to be, I can do it?” I asked her.

“That’s right.” She said.

“Wow...that’s incredible, I feel better already knowing this. I will try to remember this next time.”
“Well Tita, the news gets better...now that you are a follower of Jesus, God’s Holy Spirit...in you...will remind you that you can do this. But you still have to choose to listen. He will speak to you through that little soft voice of your conscience!”

And you know something? This was exactly what began to happen. From then on when I felt myself becoming angry, that ‘little voice’ of my conscience would tell me I was about to say or do something nasty. This helped me to stop immediately...and then ideas began coming into my head to tell me what to do instead of showing my anger. For example if I took a deep breath...this gave me time to think before saying something I would immediately regret. Other times I felt that the best thing was to just move away physically from the person or the situation. Later, if I needed to deal with that problem I could do it in a calm way. As I began obeying this little voice within me, doing these things became easier. And...you know...it was amazing...I began to feel some ‘compassion’ for the other person. When they did something to upset me I would think: ‘Perhaps she’s having a bad day...or...perhaps someone upset him and that’s why he’s treating me this way. It was so good to understand that others may hurt you because *they* are *also* hurting. They may not *mean* to hurt or upset you.

These changes in me had a very positive effect in my life. I felt now that I had the power to control my emotions. It felt so good to hear my family say, “What’s going on? You seem to be acting so differently...you don’t shout like you used to.”

That was the best of all, knowing that the change in me was noticeable and good for *all* my relationships!

This was totally amazing! ...But wait a minute...remember the picture of the wood and the nails? Once my anger has hurt someone it’s as if I’ve made a hole in that person’s life or in our relationship. Even if I take the nail out there is still a hole there!

Well...my good friend told me some even better news. Did you know that there’s a product that will fill up holes in wood? You will then see a little mark where the hole was...but no more hole!

She continued to explain to me: “God loves us so much and has the power to heal the damage we cause when our anger is out of control. The relationship may never be quite the same as before...there may be a kind of ‘scar’ as a reminder of the wound...but healing can happen with God’s help.” Then she warned me...“Let me just be very clear: God can heal the damage we may cause, but this does *not* mean we have permission to act in anger. We must allow the Spirit of God to guide us and give us power to live as he would want us to live!”

Dear friend, I used to struggle with my anger getting out of control, but I have learned that I can control it because I have God’s power at work in me and as Paul said in God’s word: “I can do *everything* with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need.” (Phil 4:13 NLT)

Carol: We want to Thank Tita for sharing with us today about how God helped her to face her anger with the power of his Holy Spirit in her life.

Tammy: Let’s think about some of the things Tita has told us...

Her friend was very wise when she said that Tita’s experience is normal for all people. Our human nature leads us to do things that are not pleasing to God. This is called *sin*. We all make mistakes and hurt other people don’t we?

Carol: But it's what we do after we've hurt them that really matters. We should not just say, "Oh well – we all hurt other people," and then do nothing about it, should we? Remember the hole we have just hammered into their heart? We need to go and tell them that we're sorry and ask them to forgive us. And we need to ask God to forgive us too.

Tammy: Tita learned about God's love for her and how Jesus died to take away her sin. Her friend told her that now that she's a follower of Jesus, the spirit of God lives in her...and is there to *help* her.

Carol: Friend, you can know the true God and his love too. He's waiting for you to come to him...to ask him to forgive you for your sin - that wrong behavior in your life. And his Holy Spirit will come and live in you and give you his *own* power in your spirit to say NO to wrong behavior.

Tammy: Isn't that great news.

Carol: We would like to share a letter with you today from a listener who also found Jesus. This is what she said:

'I am a listener of your program. I thank God for using his word to change my life and my husband's as well... You know, one day by chance I stopped by my friend's house. I listened to Women of Hope with her and found it so interesting I asked her about the person named Jesus. And when she told me the good news about him, I agreed to accept him in my heart as the Saviour. Thank God for accepting me as his child. Another thing is that he has healed my illness and with prayers from others, my body has experienced the wonderful healing from God. I thank him so much.'

Tita: Thanks Carol. It always warms my heart to hear of other people becoming followers of Jesus too.

Tammy: It's time for us to say good bye now...until next time...God bless you and fill you with his power in your life.