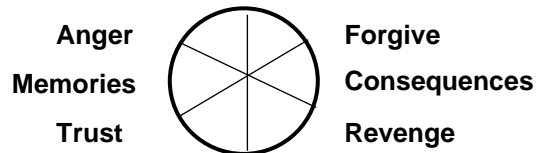


# Focused Discipleship

## Forgiveness - Part I Positive Benefit of Anger

Key Words: Feel, Offense, Offender, Forgive

- I. Psychiatrist Dr. Paul Meier made a powerful observation, “A majority of mental health problems can be avoided by becoming skilled in the use of the forgiveness tool” (Meier, p. 175).
  - A. Psychologist Dr. David Stoop states, “Forgiveness is the key to resolving the pain of the past. Without it nothing is ever laid to rest (Stoop, p. 17).
  - B. The act of forgiveness is only one piece of the forgiveness pie.

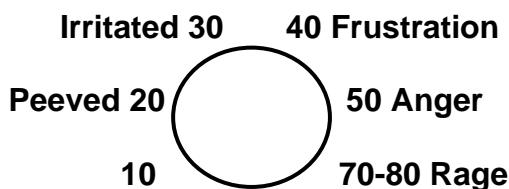


- II. (Surprisingly) One of the biggest hindrances leading to forgiveness and healing is the reluctance to admit the presence of anger and then to use it in a positive way.
  - A. One of the common reasons anger is not pictured in any positive way is that there is so little written, spoken or taught about anger from a positive perspective.
    1. Psychologist Dr. Gary Oliver, the Executive Director of the Center for Marriage and Family Studies at John Brown University, states: “In Christian circles, not enough has been written on the positive side of anger” (Oliver, p. 283).
      - a. When working with individuals or families, anger is the most common emotion expressed.
    2. The positive benefit of anger was the basis for *God’s Peace in Your Home*.

- a. One couple in Venezuela has taken over 5,000 people through this book in Spanish (*Como Controlar La Ira*) in small groups.
  - b. A doctor in Venezuela read it and said it changed their 40-year marriage.
3. Dr. Oliver estimates that at least 50% of the Christians he has polled view anger from an almost exclusively negative perspective (IBID, p. 278).
  4. The pastor of a large church in Veracruz, Mexico reported that most teaching on anger concludes that if you are angry, you are going to hell.
    - a. Of the 465 times the word anger is used in the Old Testament, 375 times is referring to God's anger.
    - b. (Jesus') Mark 3:5 "After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

**B. Anger could be the most lied about emotion, especially in Christian circles. As a result, we wear a mask and hide behind a smile. Why?**

1. Because there is a lot of guilt, shame, embarrassment and judgment in association with anger.
2. People will say, "I'm not angry, I'm just frustrated." But frustration is the Christian word for anger. Public image and saving face are everything.
3. Anger can be experienced at various speeds or intensities inside you.



Ask the group what they were taught about anger.  
 How was anger taught to them and by whom?  
 What influence did that teaching have on their emotional life?

**C. There are at least four biblical reasons Christians avoid acknowledging the presence of their anger (and they are good reasons).**

1. Anger is selfish and is labeled as one of the fruit of the flesh (selfishness).
  - a. Gal. 5:20-21a, “idolatry, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...”
2. Anger is encouraged to be removed from you in scripture at all costs – Don’t Stuff It!
  - a. Eph. 4:31, “Let all bitterness and rage [*thumos*] and anger be put away from you along with all malice [desire to do evil].”
  - b. But it does not state how to remove it.
3. Anger does not produce good results in our relationships. It is one of the most damaging emotions to relationships and is the top destroyer in marriage and in relationships with children.
  - a. James 1:20, “for the anger of man does not achieve [produce] the righteousness of God.” “The righteousness God desires.”
  - b. Prov. 29:22 “an angry man stirs up strife” (conflict).
4. Angry people are to be avoided.
  - a. Prov. 22:24, “Do not associate [connect] with [marry] a man controlled by anger or don’t go with [spend time with] a person who has a temper.”

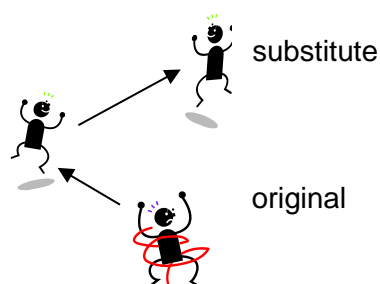
**D. Anger is never buried dead emotionally inside you even if it is stuffed or repressed (neither is fear, guilt, shame).**

Psychologists will tell you the reason:

1. Emotions never die because they are recorded both chemically and electronically in the brain just like events are recorded.
2. Anger goes deep down inside the heart and stays buried temporarily and then it seeps out in life in various ways; mentally, emotionally and/or physically and in relationships.
  - a. You can suppress it, repress it, but sooner or later you will express it.

- b. Hebrews 12:15 “See to it that no one fails to respond to the grace of God [He gives it when we are hurt]; that no root of bitterness [from anger] springing up (like a poisonous plant] causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.”
  - 1) God gives grace immediately to handle the offense whether there is a change or we recognize the grace or not.
  - 2) God’s grace is always more than adequate at the time of need whether we acknowledge it or not.
    - a) Paul had God’s grace at the same time he was asking God to remove the thorn. Paul was focusing on and consumed by the *thorn* while not seeing the presence of God’s grace.
    - b) It was not until he learned of the benefit of the thorn (power in weakness) that he recognized the grace. The thorn did not change only Paul’s attitude toward the thorn. As a result, he bragged about the weakness instead of asking for it to be removed and even became content with it (2 Cor. 12:7-10).
3. Psychiatrist Dr. Paul Meier estimates that 95% of all cases of depression are caused by repressed (stuffed or accumulated) anger toward others or oneself (Meier p. 168).
  - a. Clinical depression symptoms: can’t sleep, decreased energy, irritability, poor concentration, headaches, decrease in appetite, digestive trouble, high blood pressure, hardened facial features, thoughts of suicide.
  - b. Antidepressant medication will give temporary relief to the clinically depressed person by rebuilding (replenishing) the brain’s serotonin level. But until the root cause of the person’s depression is dealt with (biblically), the depression returns within days. In most cases, the root cause of the depression is repressed anger and until the person truly forgives the person(s) who has/have caused the anger, the brain will continue to be depressed, possibly for life (Meier, p. 170).
  - c. Dr. Rubin says, “Depression is one way of discharging accumulated anger (Rubin, p. 45).
4. Dr. Meier states that unprocessed anger can also get transferred (displaced) or redirected from the original object of the anger and is taken out on a more acceptable and safer substitute (others or self) (Meier, p. 186).

a. Birth family source



b. Much anger is generational (i.e. spouse abuse).

5. Even a majority of anxiety disorders involve fear of becoming aware of unconscious, repressed (stuffed) anger toward others or ourselves (Meier, p.168).
6. Anger, therefore, can be stored up over the years. As it is collected, it raises your normal anger level to an abnormal one. When you were born, your daily anger level was “0.” But as you accumulate anger, your anger level can rise from “0” to any level 1-10. If you are stuck at an anger level of 8 and experience an offense or hurt at a level 2, you add that to 8 and your reaction is a 10. Often anger expressed at a level 10 is not an “over-reaction,” it is an accumulated reaction.

## Historical anger

10	High
8	Stuck at an 8 in adulthood (short fuse, temper)
0	Base level

7. You can still function in life with a wounded, angry heart but it is much more difficult. It is like living life with handcuffs on or a constant drain on your emotional battery.

### E. Built up anger allows Satan to take over the management decisions of our lives, relationships and choices // (quick temper).

1. Eph. 4:26,27, “Be angry [Greek, *orge*], and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your anger, nor give place [control of your life] to the devil” (CF. Ps. 4:4).
  - a. James 3:6, an out-of-control tongue is “set on fire by hell.”
  - b. There is a switch from Spirit control to devil control.
2. Note: This warning was written to Christians.

- a. 2 Cor. 2:10,11, "Lest Satan should take advantage of us for we are not ignorant of his devices [strategies]."
- b. This is not demon possession but is demonic influence. Possession implies ownership. Believers belong to God. I Cor. 6:19, "Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?"
  - 1) Matt. 16:23, "Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'"

In what ways has your anger damaged any of your relationships?  
 How did you correct it?  
 How did others respond to your change?  
 How have you experienced others correcting their anger?  
 How did they do it?

#### **F. Anger can be a major source of shame. "Why did I do that?"**

1. Because when we are angry we do a lot of hurtful things and later we realize we were foolish, stupid and even dumb to have done them. Then the shame pours in. Usually when we are angry we do the next dumb thing and regret it later.
  - a. Prov. 14:17, "A quick tempered man acts foolishly..."
2. The people complained to Moses because they were dehydrated. God told Moses to speak to the rock and water would come forth to supply Israel's needs. Instead, Moses, in anger, struck the rock and water came out, but as a result God did not allow him to enter the promised land of Canaan.
  - a. Num. 20:11-12, "Then Moses (in anger) lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. <sup>12</sup> Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."
    - 1) Root offense: dishonored God by disobeying Him.

- 2) Moses never took personal responsibility for his actions and blamed the people for his outburst. Deut. 1:37, "The Lord was also angry with me for your sakes [projection].
  - a) Projection: criticizing a fault, habit or attitude in someone else when it's really our attitude, fault or habit accusing others of what we are doing.

**G. Anger can be expressed in various ways:**

1. Internal churning (orge). Eph.4:26 "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."
2. Exploder (*thumos*, outbursts of rage, temper)
3. Imploders it is expressed in subtle ways towards those who hurt them. They can turn it in on themselves resulting in depression. Rage can be turned against oneself and it can result in suicide. It can come out in passive anger.
  - a. Evasive: He will deliberately avoid any attempt to be held accountable for his actions or attitude.
  - b. He will withdraw and give the silent treatment.
  - c. He will put off indefinitely fulfilling a promised task.
  - d. He becomes lazy.
  - e. He makes promises knowing he is not going to follow through.
  - f. He agrees to what the person asks then does the opposite.
  - g. He will not acknowledge any of his shortcomings.
  - h. He does things secretly.
  - i. He frustrates others by being late.
  - j. He is very uncaring.
4. Runners (withdraw, become avoiders, hide in drugs, alcohol, business, work, computers, T.V., etc.)

How did you see these three expressions of anger demonstrated in your home?

How did it affect your family?

**H. (It is true) Anger can be used in many wrong ways.**

1. To change someone
2. To control spouse, kids, people, employees; creates egg walkers who modify their behavior in an attempt to manage someone else's triggers, moods, behaviors.
3. To manipulate look for the hook.
  - a. They manipulate through intimidating anger.
  - b. You'll have to please the angry person or they will get mad.
  - c. Manipulators are the ones who cause others to walk on eggs (hyper-sensitive) to prevent the angry one from acting out in their anger.
    - 1) Manipulation does not work if you do not have a "hook" inside of you, i.e., you need their acceptance.
  - d. Those who walk on eggs take responsibility to control the anger of the angry person.
4. To avoid feeling other negative emotions // like fear and guilt.
  - a. If one is made to feel guilty, he will get angry to hide or avoid feeling the guilt.
  - b. Anger is usually hiding another emotion like fear.
5. To avoid responsibility
  - a. If one fails to perform a responsibility and is held responsible for that failure he could get mad to get you to back down and reduce his accountability.
6. To get revenge on someone whom you feel needs to pay for the pain they caused you.
7. To get their own selfish way especially if their way [will] is blocked.



In what ways have you used anger in a wrong way?  
 How do you believe you learned it?  
 How was unhealthy anger used on you?  
 How did you feel?  
 What have you done with it since?

**II. Understand God's perspective on anger. There are at least four reasons to welcome and acknowledge the presence of anger.**

**A. God knows you are going to get hurt in life and in relationships. It is only a matter of when and how. It is normal.**

1. It's a fact of life that every person will get hurt emotionally and sometimes physically, even in Christian relationships.
  - a. Col. 3:19, "Husbands, love your wives and do not become embittered against them."
2. The Apostle Peter warned us, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning (regarding) the fiery (painful) trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (I Pet 4:12).
  - a. Expect the trial! Start the process of growing.
  - b. "Strange", amazed, shocked. "Why me, God?"
    - 1) This shock can reflect the wrong theology that as believers they are exempt or excused from the hurts, trials and loss of life. Some have abandoned God/church because of it.
3. Jesus said in Jn. 16:33 "...in this world you will have tribulations but take courage, I have overcome the world" (demonic system).
  - a. Some believe all trials are a result of sin (blind man).
    - 1) Jn. 9:2.3, "His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'"
    - 2) That is "toxic faith to believe all pain and loss is because of sin." Bad doctrine.

4. The apostle Paul clearly stated that all who would live godly lives will experience hurts.
  - a. 2 Tim. 3:12, “and indeed all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
  
5. Believers are not excused from the natural law of cause and effect (Christian spouses die of cancer; babies die; believers have accidents).
  - a. I Cor. 10:13, “No temptation (or trial) has overtaken (seized from behind) you (believers) such as is common to man (mankind) ...”
    - 1) “*Temptation*” is the same Greek word for *trial* in James 1:2, “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials...”
  
6. (In fact) Christians are singled out to experience hurt. That is one good reason to learn to respond to it biblically.
  - a. I Peter 2:20-21, “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right, and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose [to suffer], since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”
  - b. “Called” (Greek, *ek* - out of, *kaleo* - to call) (I Pet. 2:21)
    - 1) ill. In the military, an officer will call out certain men who are lined up before him for some special assignment. They are called-out ones.
  - c. It is a myth to believe that the safest place in the world is to be in the center of God’s will. Unfortunately, that is not true. Ask the apostle Paul how safe it is to be in the center of God’s will (2 Cor. 6:2-5; 11:24-27).
    - 1) Five times beaten with rods
    - 2) Stoned once
    - 3) Three times shipwrecked (night/day in the ocean)
    - 4) Perils (in danger of) of robbers, his countrymen, Gentiles, city, desert, false brethren, weariness, toil, hunger, thirst, cold, naked, often in fasting, imprisonments, etc.

- 5) Were these painful events an indication that Paul was out of God's will? He fought a good fight and kept his faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

Why do you think so many believers are bitter when they experienced terrific hurts or tragedies?

What does that reflect in their thinking? (Bad things are not to happen to God's people.)

Where do you think they were taught that?

Why do you think some teachers and preachers have failed to tell them the truth about suffering?

**B. God knows that anger can be an automatic normal emotional response to present and past hurts whether you are a Christian or not.**

1. It is not usually a choice to get angry, but it is a choice with what you do with the anger.
  - a. Eph. 4:26, ““In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry...”
  - b. James 1:19, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...”
2. What advantage does a believer have over a non-believer in dealing with the painful hurts of life that can result in anger?
  - a. God gives him the tools to use to process it (II Peter 1:3). Granted *to* us.
  - b. God gives him the power to use the tools (Phil. 2:13). God is at work *in* us.
  - c. God gives him the training through experience to use the tools (James 1:2, 3). Trials are trainers.
  - d. God gives him the support while using the tools (Gal. 6:2).
  - e. God gives him rewards for using the tools (II Cor. 5:10).
3. But just as anger is automatic, our mature response to it must be automatic by using our biblical tools to deal with it.

- a. We are just taught not to be angry but not how to deal with it.
- 4. Because anger is such a natural response even in Christian people, how to deal with it should be taught often in the church.

**C. God designed anger to be a notifier of needs, hurts, fears and frustrations like pain reveals physical needs.**

- 1. The red light on the dashboard of a car indicates to the driver a need the car has. If one ignores this warning light, the car could experience serious damage. Your emotions are your red light to prevent further damage.
  - a. One therapist said she just put her foot over the red light.
- 2. Psychologist Dr. Les Carter would say, “Anger is an emotion that speaks up for personal needs” (Carter, p. 28). It gives pain, hurt, loss a voice.
  - a. “Anger is not sin. It is emotional information” (Norm Wright). Emotions are conveying objects of pain.
- 3. The Psalmist used his emotion of depressed feelings to discover his need. He prayed and asked himself, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted (upset, depressed) within me?” (Ps. 42:5a).
  - a. “Cast down” lit. “bent down” as in depression.
  - b. The Psalmist felt the emotion first, then, asked himself a question to determine what the need was behind the emotion.
  - c. He used that emotion like a window to see through to determine his need.
  - d. The goal of pointing out the source of the hurt or negative emotion is so it can be healed and the person set free. In the Psalmist’s case, he discovered he had lost hope in God.
    - 1) Ps. 42:5 “Hope in God, for I shall [yet] praise Him for the help of His countenance.” His face of approval.

**D. (Therefore) God gives you permission to acknowledge (feel) your healthy anger without shame. Eph. 4:26 “Be angry and do not sin.”**

- 1. You should be able to give a person permission to acknowledge his anger and express it appropriately. When someone admits they’re angry, respond with an open, receptive, accepting facial expression. This

conveys you are a safe person and encourages them to be honest and open about their anger so it can be processed biblically.

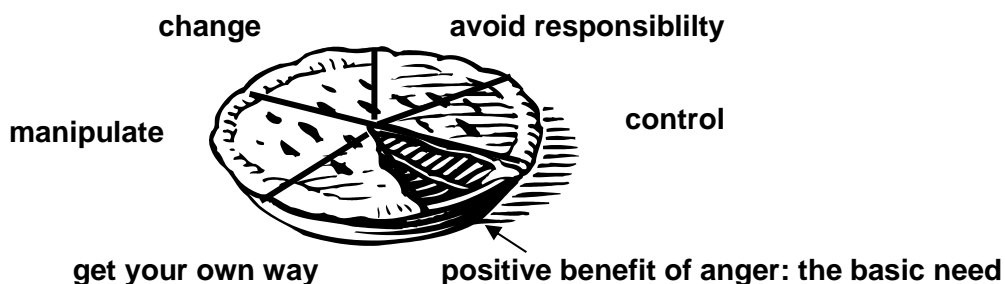
2. God did not say, “Do not sin by being angry” (Eph. 4:26)
  - a. Many people were never allowed to be angry (have a voice) even in a healthy sense; therefore, they were never able to heal a hurt.
  - b. They may have been sent to their room as a child to change their attitude.
    - 1) Told to stop crying – big boys (girls) don’t cry. Then in adulthood they have to reconnect with their emotions.
    - 2) Denying or forced to stuff your emotions is a form of emotional abuse.
  - c. Or, they may have been shamed and told they should not feel that way.
3. There are two Greek words used for anger in the New Testament.
  - a. Orge – inside agitation that tends to be more abiding, stirring, churning, often with a possible goal of revenge.
    - 1) This is the word for “anger” in Eph. 4:26.
    - 2) Prov. 14:29:a, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding.”
    - 3) James 1:9a, “...Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry.”
  - b. Thumos – quick bursts of hot rage, temper, that erupts like a volcano then quickly reduces. It is more sudden in its rise than *orge*.
    - 1) This word is found 18 times in the New Testament.
      - a) Ten are in Revelation. Seven of the ten refer to God’s rage in Revelation.
      - b) Once in Romans 2:8.
      - c) The remaining seven uses of *thumos* are never used in a good sense in the New Testament (Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28).
    - 2) God never gave us permission to go into a volcanic rage and erupt all over people inflicting pain and destruction.

4. God gives you full permission to acknowledge present anger (*orge*) without feeling guilty about it or second guessing yourself. But, with that permission it is your responsibility to deal with it in a biblical way. God never gave permission to explode in anger and be hurtful, either physically or emotionally to anyone.

### III. Discover the legitimate need behind your friend, anger, to be healed. How?

#### A. Identify the positive benefit of anger.

1. If a pie is divided into six equal parts, five of those parts are wrong expressions of anger. But one part (slice) of the pie represents a positive benefit of anger.
  - a. Negative uses:



2. The positive part of anger is that it reveals a hurt that needs to be worked through by the use of the biblical tool of forgiveness.
  - a. If you acknowledge the anger, you will acknowledge the offense.
  - b. If you acknowledge the offense, you will clearly identify the offender.
  - c. If you do identify the offender, you can forgive and be free.
    - 1) That is why anger can be beneficial if it leads to the offense and ultimately leads to forgiveness.
  - d. If you fail to forgive, you will remain in the bondage of bitterness and of emotional torment.

#### B. Give yourself permission to feel it. It is stored in your core belief system called the heart.

1. Josh's story
  - a. I've known Josh for years. He was raised in a single parent home by his mother who never married. He attended a private Christian school, excelling in speech and drama, was handsome and talented but had one 'small' problem. This 'small' problem frequently robbed Josh and his mother of any peace in their home. Why? Josh was a rager!
  - b. When Josh acknowledged his anger, the counselor said, "Great, feel the rage and tell me where it is coming from."
2. When Josh could feel his anger, he was able to identify and list the offenses, which was preparation for the steps of forgiveness.
3. For Josh, God revealed through prayer that the object of his anger was his mother. God may reveal more than one person who is the source of your anger.
4. His immediate reaction was, "I'm not going to blame my mom for my own behavior."
5. Josh had to distinguish in his mind between "excusing" his wrong behavior and "explaining" the source of the hurt that caused the anger that needed to be forgiven.
  - a. Excusing wrong behavior is sin. But understanding where the wrong behavior is coming from in order to process it biblically is good.
6. The word guilt means "worthy of blame." Josh's mom was responsible for her behavior that impacted Josh. He was responsible to process the hurts his mother caused by using the tool of forgiveness.
7. Failure to assign legitimate responsibility for the wrongs that were inflicted will automatically prevent the granting of forgiveness and prevent healing. Unintentional sin still has to be paid for and forgiven.

**C. Follow the anger down to the offense (need) to be processed.**

1. Note the list of hurts (wounds) Josh was able to identify because he was allowed to feel the anger.
  - a. Mom forced me to grow up too fast.
  - b. She made me emotionally dependent on her.
  - c. She made me responsible for her emotional well-being.
  - d. She told me what to believe and did not allow me to question her.

- e. She never allowed me to have an opinion different from hers.
  - f. She made me her husband replacement.
  - g. She restricted me from having friends my own age while insisting on being my best friend.
  - h. She never allowed me to have choices.
  - i. She insisted on tagging along wherever I went with my friends.
  - j. She was very controlling because of her fear.
  - k. She was jealous of any potential girlfriend.
  - l. She lived a hypocritical lifestyle that did not reflect her religious convictions.
  - m. She distorted my view of God, a wife and a mother.
  - n. She insisted on perfection.
  - o. Her acceptance was based on performance.
  - p. She treats me as a 12-year-old when I am 21.
  - q. She made me responsible to rescue her from her bad decisions.
  - r. She didn't allow me to express normal emotions like anger.
2. Aristotle once said, "An archer is more apt to hit the target if he can see it." You, too, are more likely to forgive a person if you clearly identify their offense that needs to be forgiven.

**D. As we met with Jenny, I asked her to tell me her story. I also said, "Don't fight off your emotions but give them a voice." Apparently, they never had a voice. "Tonight, God is giving you permission to share your history and the emotions behind it." I kept urging her not to stop and that it was okay to feel and express those emotions. Her story broke our hearts. As she shared, I kept track of the specific hurts she endured and the lies that had been instilled in her through those events.**

- 1. Her parents never married but just lived together and had children. No stable home or security.
- 2. Her birth father was repeatedly unfaithful to her mom, producing nine children by five women.
- 3. He finally abandoned her, her brother and mother for another woman.
- 4. Her mother told her that her dad did not want her but instead wanted a boy to replace the one who had died.
- 5. Her mother became bitter that dad left and out of her anger she literally beat Jenny and her brother with a rubber hose every day. She would



explode in stored up anger and take it out on her kids. They reminded her of him and his betrayal.

6. Jenny emotionally froze at the news that her dad was not coming back (abandoned).
7. She was raped by an uncle at age nine, drugged and raped at age 10, often molested by relatives and by other men at 16.
8. She told her mother but she didn't believe her.
9. Jenny never had her mother's approval and was still attempting to gain it.

**E. After she was able to forgive her mother, Jenny experienced many changes.**

1. "I feel like an adult now."
2. "I feel I can talk with my mother adult-to-adult."
3. "I feel so much lighter."
4. "I think I can get our master bedroom back and have her use the guest room."
5. Her mom moved into an apartment.
6. Their relationship improved.
7. Her depression disappeared.
8. She needed to ask forgiveness of the family she hurt.

**IV. Keys for Success**

- A. Acknowledge the positive side of anger.**
- B. Avoid the wrong uses of anger.**
- C. Welcome anger as a means of identifying an offense.**
- D. View emotions as notifiers of needs.**
- E. Discover the need behind the anger.**
- F. Choose to meet that need in a healthy way.**
- G. Identify offenses.**

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