

Life With God In Recovery

STEP FOUR Stored Anger



Step 4: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Anger is an involuntary reaction to a displeasing situation or event. If it is a limited reaction to a displeasing event, it may be considered normal. However, when anger is stored, then it becomes dangerous. Stored anger causes us to be resentful and hostile with the urge to get even. Inner turmoil is the result of not obeying the following advice.

In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. (Ephesians 4:26 NIV)

Unresolved displeasing situations or events may cause us to store anger which, if not dealt with, deteriorates through time into frustration, anxiety, hatred, despair, rage, hopelessness. Carrying feelings like these from childhood into adulthood may result in us trying to control each situation we encounter so we can be in a position to hurt others before they hurt us. We may become people pleasers in order to gain favour and solicit another's good will. We want to "fit in" and desire to be loved and treated with respect. To help fit in with the crowd we may enter into unhealthy relationships and/or addictions which we believe will fill the emptiness inside.

Unfortunately, all the painful baggage we have not dealt with will accompany us until we actually deal with it. Anger stored inside us erupts and spews into our relationships causing the other person frustration and pain. Addictions we thought would help us deal with our pain and frustration actually push us further into the dark side of hopelessness and the persona we adopt keeps us from being real even with ourselves.

At some point we came to the realization that we needed help to deal with the confusion residing in the deepest places of our being. When we came to know Jesus and accepted salvation through His death on the cross, we became new creations. The old has gone and the new has come.

We are challenged by God to demonstrate this transformation by acting and reacting in new ways. ***“...now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”*** (Colossians 3:8-10 NIV)

This is really good advice but how do we change what has become for us a normal way of behaving? We first need to accept the freedom that comes with salvation and understand that we are deeply loved by our Creator.

“My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in. And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:14-19 MSG.)

To resolve stored anger, we need to focus on dealing with the root cause of our anger rather than dwelling on the current problem. People, places and things may trigger anger. Our reflection and prayer must be directed at

uprooting any hostility and resentment that supports our attitude and responses. We need to understand the fullness of God's love for us even in the midst of our past and present experiences. His healing power will free us from anger and we'll eventually experience His peace in our hearts. As we come to acknowledge the grace and love we have received through Christ, we are able then to forgive and grace others, as God has forgiven and graced us.

As we go forward, we can avoid relapse into stored anger by practicing some simple principles.

1) Instead of trying to get others to understand us, we need to try to understand where others might be coming from when they behave in a particular way.

God's word directs us, ***"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."*** (Romans 12:3 NIV)

2) We'll see positive changes when we practice the "PUT OFF" and "PUT ON" principle: ***"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."*** (Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV)

3) Practice looking for God's help and encouragement rather than getting discouraged when things are not as you would have them. Remember that God is able to make you stand firm in Christ. ***"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."*** (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

It's time to get rid of the stored anger that's been packed away in the dark places of our soul. God is ready and willing to comfort and heal us. God is faithful and will show us safe and healthy ways to deal with challenging situations and relationships without resorting to anger.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. How has stored anger been a problem in my life?
2. Where do I notice resentment in me and a desire to "get even" as I reflect on events in my life?
3. What have I done to get rid of expressions of anger such as, rage, gossip, negative talk, complaining, and profanity?
4. How am I addressing the root problem in me rather than the triggering events or people?
5. Three principles are given to help us avoid relapsing into anger. How am I doing in implementing these principles?
 - a. Try understanding the "triggering person or thing" and our outburst of anger in relation to the person or thing.
 - b. Practice "putting off" and "putting on"
 - c. Seeking encouragement and help from God

6. What action can I take to experience more success in not sinning in my anger?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I ask forgiveness for the times I have reacted in anger and caused harm to others. Please show me the underlying root of my destructive anger. My desire is to have peace in my heart and to treat others with respect. I choose to “put off” anger and rage which hinders my relationship with you and with others. Help me to “put on” my new self which is clothed in righteousness and holiness. Make me more like you. I ask these things in the precious name of Jesus. AMEN