



From the Pastor's Heart

September 2010

Dear Mrs. Sample,

Many years ago, there was a member of our fellowship who was very committed to God, taught Sunday school, and was a fine example to those he instructed. I thought a great deal of him. Sadly, when sickness befell his three-year-old son and the little boy died, all that changed. The man became angry toward the Lord, the church, and anyone who crossed his path.

It's understandable that this fellow would have a lot to wrestle with—who could bear the loss of a beloved child? Unfortunately, he did not understand how to deal with the feelings of pain and bereavement he was experiencing, or how dangerous it was for him to hold on to them. So he went into a tailspin. Sorrow festered within him until his life was characterized by bitterness and resentment.

This believer lost far more than his son—he forfeited his life, health, effectiveness for the kingdom of God, and relationships as well. That is why Ephesians 4:31 instructs, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you.” Although these emotions are natural for us to feel, they are extremely destructive when we hold on to and nurture them.

That's not to say we will never experience genuine displeasure, frustration, or indignation as a result of a threat, loss, injustice, or insult. We will, and we should acknowledge these emotions. But if we do not deal with them in a godly manner, they can do us and our loved ones even greater harm.

So consider, when was the last time you experienced anger? How did you handle it? Did you let go of those intense feelings? Or do you still harbor them in your heart? Today, if some hurt, bitterness, or resentment has taken up residence in you, I encourage you to prayerfully consider the following positive steps as a defense against these devastating emotions.

First, confess what you're feeling to God. As long as you deny the emotions exist, you are merely repressing them. They continue to control you. However, when you acknowledge your frustration and anger to the Lord, you take an important step toward taking hold of the peace He desires for you to enjoy.

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Second, identify the nature and source of your emotions. From what do they stem? What happened in your life that made you especially sensitive to certain kinds of pressures, injustices, or offenses? You cannot heal unless you know the true cause of your wounds.

Third, decide to deal with your feelings immediately. Ephesians 4:26 instructs, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger.” The longer you allow your exasperation to continue, the more damage it will do to your heart and relationships. Take it to the Father as soon as possible.

Fourth, do not sin. James 1:19 admonishes, “Be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” Whenever circumstances arise that cause irritation and fury to rise up within you, take time to seek the Lord’s direction about how to deal with them in a godly manner. Through Bible reading and prayer, God will clarify your situation and show you how to deal with the problem effectively.

Fifth, use the energy produced by your emotions to pursue something positive, beneficial, and edifying. For example, if you see an injustice in your community, find ways to minister to those involved, showing them the love of Jesus. You can also channel the drive you feel into activities such as exercise, cleaning your house, and spending time with the Father. All of these pastimes improve your life and release the energy pent up within you.

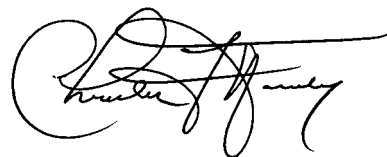
Sixth, develop strategies to help you respond correctly to the anger you feel. As long as you live in this fallen world, there will be people, circumstances, and issues that trigger frustration and indignation within you. Therefore, be able to identify when emotions begin to take hold, and decide in advance how you will respond. Also, before entering situations that are especially volatile, prepare yourself with prayer.

Finally, aggression is contagious, so stay away from those with a temper or a complaining spirit. Recognize the characteristics in others that are especially upsetting to you and avoid them when possible. Those with an angry disposition will eventually affect the way you view your situation.

Scripture is clear: “The churning of anger produces strife” (Prov. 30:33). You cannot live a happy, healthy, effective, and fruitful life if you are harboring unresolved resentment. But God can free you from the bondage of bitterness if you will allow Him to purify your heart and instruct you.

Whenever anger is stirred up within you, remember to confess what you’re feeling to the Father immediately, identify the source of your distress, seek His counsel as to how to handle the situation, and deal with the problem in the godly manner He prescribes. Undoubtedly, you’ll be pleasantly surprised at how the Lord heals your heart and transforms your most frustrating circumstances into vessels for blessing.

Prayerfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles F. Stanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "S".

Charles F. Stanley

P.S. Thank you for partnering with In Touch Ministries. Although at times the situation you are experiencing may appear irreversible, it is not beyond His reach. Do not be discouraged. Continue to trust that He is moving on your behalf. May He reveal His love and provision to you in an especially powerful way today.