



Secrets to a Successful Marriage

Principle number Twenty-Three

Guard your heart

Proverbs 4:20-27 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

The way that you deal with the issues of life is determined by what is in your heart. The issues of marriage, children, or your job; your reaction when things go wrong; the issues of life are determined by what is in your heart. Why do you react the way that you do? Why do certain things always make you angry? Why is it for the last twenty years you have been getting angry over the same thing? It is because of what is in your heart. For the first six years of my marriage I was very lazy. I would not do anything around the house. My wife nagged and nagged. It was the only way she could get me to do anything. My attitude was, "If I help her do anything, she will always expect me to do it." That thought was in my heart and because of that thought; I would not do anything around the house. The Bible calls that type of thought pattern a stronghold. That thought was very selfish and was causing problems in my marriage. The Lord dealt with me and set me free from that strong hold in my mind. I changed that thought to, "If I don't do it, my wife will have to." One thought put me first and the other thought put my wife first. One brought death to my marriage and the other brought life. Your thoughts will determine your actions. When it comes to overcoming anger in your life you will have to take notice of the thoughts that are in your mind. The next time you get angry stop and examine the thought that is justifying your anger. That thought that is justifying your anger is a stronghold in your mind. It is causing you to act the way that you are. If you will be honest with yourself, you will have to admit that thought that is justifying your anger is selfish.

Ephesians 4:26-27,29-32 Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

All of us get angry. The word of God says when you get angry do not sin. It would be unjust for God to command us not to sin when we get angry if we could not overcome it. To overcome anger you are going to have to change the way you think. You are going to have to change your thoughts. Anger is rooted in the flesh, the old nature.

Ephesians 2:3....and were by nature the children of wrath.

Romans 6:6-7,10-12 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.... For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

When we accept Jesus Christ into our hearts, we identify with his death, burial, and resurrection. Our old selfish nature is nailed to the cross with Jesus. We are now to count ourselves dead to that nature. We are buried with him in baptism. When we come up out of the waters of baptism we resurrect with Christ a new creation. When we accept Jesus into our hearts we are born again. Our spirit is brand new and it is perfect before God. However we have to renew our minds to these amazing redemptive truths. We still have strongholds of the flesh in our hearts. As we renew our minds to our redemption in Christ the strongholds in our minds are uprooted and casted down. Remember to always judge your thoughts. Pay attention to your thinking. If it is causing anger to rise up in your emotions change what you are thinking. This takes a lot of practice to perfect. But you can certainly perfect it with practice. Your emotions are the fruit of your thoughts. If your emotions are not the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*) it is because your thoughts are not founded in the love of God.

Romans 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

You are no longer a debtor to your flesh. You don't owe your flesh anything. You no longer have to yield to the anger when you are wronged. You no longer have to feel sorry for yourself. You don't have to get even anymore, for you are not in debt to your flesh. You are dead to it. You are to count (think) yourself to be dead to your flesh. You know longer have to yield to anger. When anger starts to raise its ugly head remember you are dead to it, remember you no longer have to yield to it. When you feel anger building inside of you, resist it by speaking God's word out of your mouth. Don't allow the thoughts of anger to stay in your mind.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you.

Speak to the thoughts of anger. Say to it, "Anger, you shall not have dominion over me, for I am dead to you. I forgive my spouse, child, parent, co-worker, etc., and I thank you Father for their life. I rejoice in you Father, for greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world (*1 John 4:4*)."

Resist the devil and he will flee from you (*James 4:7*).

In most cases, anger is not the root problem in the heart of a person. Fear is the root problem and anger protects the fear.

A close friend of mine was molested as a little girl. After that experience she said in her heart, "No man will ever touch me again without my consent." A few years later after she was married and her husband would try to touch her, without her consent, she would become very angry. Anytime she felt she was not in control she would become angry. One day the Lord spoke to her and said you do not have a problem with anger, you have a problem with fear. Anger was only a symptom of the fear in her heart. She had a stronghold in her thinking that was causing great problems in her marriage. One day, as she was angry with her husband about something, the Lord spoke to her and said, "The root of your problem is fear." She asked the Lord what to do and he told her to forgive the person that molested her as a little girl. Shortly after forgiving this man, she noticed the anger was drastically weakened in her life. If you are constantly struggling with anger, there is a root problem in your heart. There are strongholds in your thinking that is causing this reaction of anger. Ask God to reveal the root problem to you and be honest with yourself. When God reveals it to you, be willing to forgive or repent.

I once counseled with a young man. He would always get angry when anyone would challenge or question him. It was causing problems in his marriage and at work on his job. As I was talking with him, I asked the Lord to reveal the root problem to this anger. The Lord quickened me to ask him if anyone had ever called him stupid as a child. He remembered very clearly that his third grade teacher, he even remembered her name, had called him stupid in front of his classmates. Because of that hurt in his heart, he thought anytime someone challenged him or questioned him, they were calling him stupid, which was the farthest thing in the world from the truth. But because of that stronghold in his thinking, anger was a big problem in his life. After the root problem was revealed I led him through a prayer and he forgave his teacher. Again, there was victory over anger in someone's life.

Forgiveness is a very powerful principle. It releases the hurt out of your heart. You forgive for your sake. Forgiveness sets you free. God has forgiven you of your sins, even when you were His enemy. He loved you and forgave you. He expects you to do the same. Because He loves you and He wants you to be free.

Remember anger is seated in the flesh. It is not the problem. It is only the symptom of the problem. Fear is the real problem. Fear someone is going to take you for granted. Fear you are going to end up doing more than someone else. Fear you are not going to be recognized. Fear you are not going to get your way, etc.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Perfect love lays its life down for others. It prefers its brother above itself. It rejoices when another is promoted or rewarded. It humbles itself and repents for the sake of peace. It overcomes evil with good. God is love. The heart of God's nature is love. When we become born again we put on a new nature. At the heart of that new nature is love. Love will cast out fear. Because fear is always selfish and love will always prefer others above itself. In *Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-32* the principle of overcoming anger is revealed. When you become angry, don't allow the sun to go down on your wrath. In other words, don't allow the thoughts to stay in your head. If you do, you will give place to the devil and you will speak evil, which will quench the Holy Spirit of God. The secret to overcoming the anger is to forgive. The next time anger starts to rise up in you do not yield to it. Do not give it place in your mind because if you do, it will overwhelm you. It will take control of your tongue, and it will cause pain and sorry to anyone around you and to yourself. When you allow those selfish, woe is me, thoughts to stay in your mind, you have just given the devil place in your life. The devil only has one purpose for getting into your life and that is to kill, steal, and destroy you (*John 10:10*). Give the devil no place. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. The Scripture is saying do not allow the selfish thoughts to stay in your mind. Cast them out.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

Words have tremendous power. The strongholds in your mind are words. The selfish thoughts that come to your mind are words. The power to destroy or to heal is in your words. God's words are more powerful than any other words. When anger comes, speak God's word out of your mouth. Speak it until the anger leaves. Judge the thoughts that justify the anger and cast them down. Change the thought patterns in your mind. Instead of being selfish, walk in love. Let the love of God rule your heart and the fear will be cast out. When the fear is gone, the anger will cease.

A Time to Reflect

1. Do you have a problem with anger?
2. Will you ask the Lord to show you where your anger is coming from?
3. The next time you start getting angry will you listen to your thoughts and cast them down?
4. Are you willing to deal with your anger for the sake of your spouse and family?
5. Will you forgive all who have wronged you?