

4 Godly Ways to Respond When Your Spouse Is Furious

You do not want to be married to someone who never becomes angry. There is no more boring or superficial relationship than when anger is eliminated at all costs. Please save me from an anger-less marriage.

Do I have your attention?

Anger scares many of us, for good reason. Many have been harmed by someone in authority or by a spouse during a period of rage and have determined never to go there again. And the enemy has used anger to bring destruction in many ways.

But you wouldn't want a God who cannot become angry, and you don't want a spouse who cannot become angry either.

Anger is evidence that one cares about someone or something. I would go so far as to say that nothing wrong has ever been made right in the world without someone becoming angry—angry enough to fight against evil, persevere in spite of enormous opposition and break down barriers. If you shut down all anger, you eliminate passion, intimacy and love.

Here's a news flash: Anger is not abuse. If you or your spouse physically harms or attempts to harm people or things when angry, that's abuse. If you or your spouse verbally attack each other with untrue or demeaning words meant only to cause pain, that's abuse. But the emotion of anger is, in itself, normal, healthy, human and can even be godly. As with sexual desire, grief or excitement, it's what one does with that emotion that makes it good or bad, healthy or unhealthy.

Anger Is not the Opposite of Love

In Scripture God is pictured as being capable of extreme

wrath. And don't you want God to be angry—unquenchably angry—at the sin that keeps human beings in bondage, at the destruction that human trafficking, war, poverty, disease, slavery, exploitation and every other perversion Satan has cooked up? Aren't you glad His anger moved Him to do something about it?

Anger is not enough. You also need love. But anger and love are very much intertwined. The antithesis of love is not anger; the opposite of love is apathy. (How dreadful!) Tweet that.

God is love, but that love expresses itself in anger at that which is out to harm His beloved—you and me. And that's the rub. In a godly marriage, you need to care enough, love enough, to learn how to deal with anger and conflict along the way to intimacy. You need to learn that true love is not weak or tolerant of just anything, but fierce, enduring and full of action.

Anger in Marriage

What does that look like in practice? How do you handle the angry feelings you experience in relationship with your spouse? What do you do when your spouse is angry? Here are some skills anyone—including you —can learn in using anger to deepen the bond and intimacy between you and your spouse.

1. Acknowledge the place of anger.

A person ruled by anger is not safe, healthy or wise. (Prov. 25:28). But if you and your spouse can learn to rule anger instead of letting it rule you, it can be invaluable. Think of the emotion as a flare sent up by your brain telling you there's something you need to deal with.

Find your own way to acknowledge the emotion. If you struggle to control your anger, take a walk and let the temperature decrease. But don't stop there. Come back, re-engage, and deal

with the issue.

2. Don't run away.

Many of us hate conflict, and so we automatically disengage, check out and mentally or physically walk away. If you are truly in danger, that's what you need to do. But if you're not in true danger, stick around. Staying engaged with your spouse validates your feelings and theirs. It's the only way to ever get to a solution.

That may be one of the hardest things you have to do. If either one of you is angry, you absolutely must agree to deal with it. You may need to plan a time to do so, but don't wait long. If nothing else, determine to deal with it before going to sleep that night. Perhaps you won't find a solution to the whole problem, but make a pact with each other to diffuse the situation before the day ends. (Eph. 4:26). And if necessary, schedule a time later to address the issue in more detail.

3. Direct anger at the right thing.

Your spouse is not the enemy. Ultimately Satan is the one who is trying to drive a wedge between you and destroy your marriage. More immediately, consciously move your focus from your spouse to the problem. Get angry at your lack of finances, not your spouse's spending. Get angry at demands pulling you in different directions, not your spouse staying late at work. Get angry at the limitations on intimacy, not your spouse saying no to sex.

Put the problem "out there" separate from you and your spouse. See yourselves as fighting the problem together, both working toward a solution. Attack the problem, not each other. If you can learn this skill, you can make progress with almost any conflict.

4. Look for the pain.

Look for the pain that triggered the anger; it's almost always there. Look for it in your spouse. Look for it in your own heart. What need is not getting met? What wound has just been exposed? What shame or fear has been aroused?

When you can identify the pain, you'll be miles closer to the solution. By being this vulnerable, you may end up wounding each other at times; acknowledge it and forgive each other quickly. That vulnerability is valuable; staying engaged while risking vulnerability will increase intimacy more than anything else.

Coming Together

I challenge you to use anger. Make it your servant. Embrace it as God's gift and learn how to make it work for you. The intimacy between you and your spouse that results will be greater than ever. {eoa}

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a boardcertified OB-GYN physician and an ordained Doctor of Ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life that Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .