

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with God through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

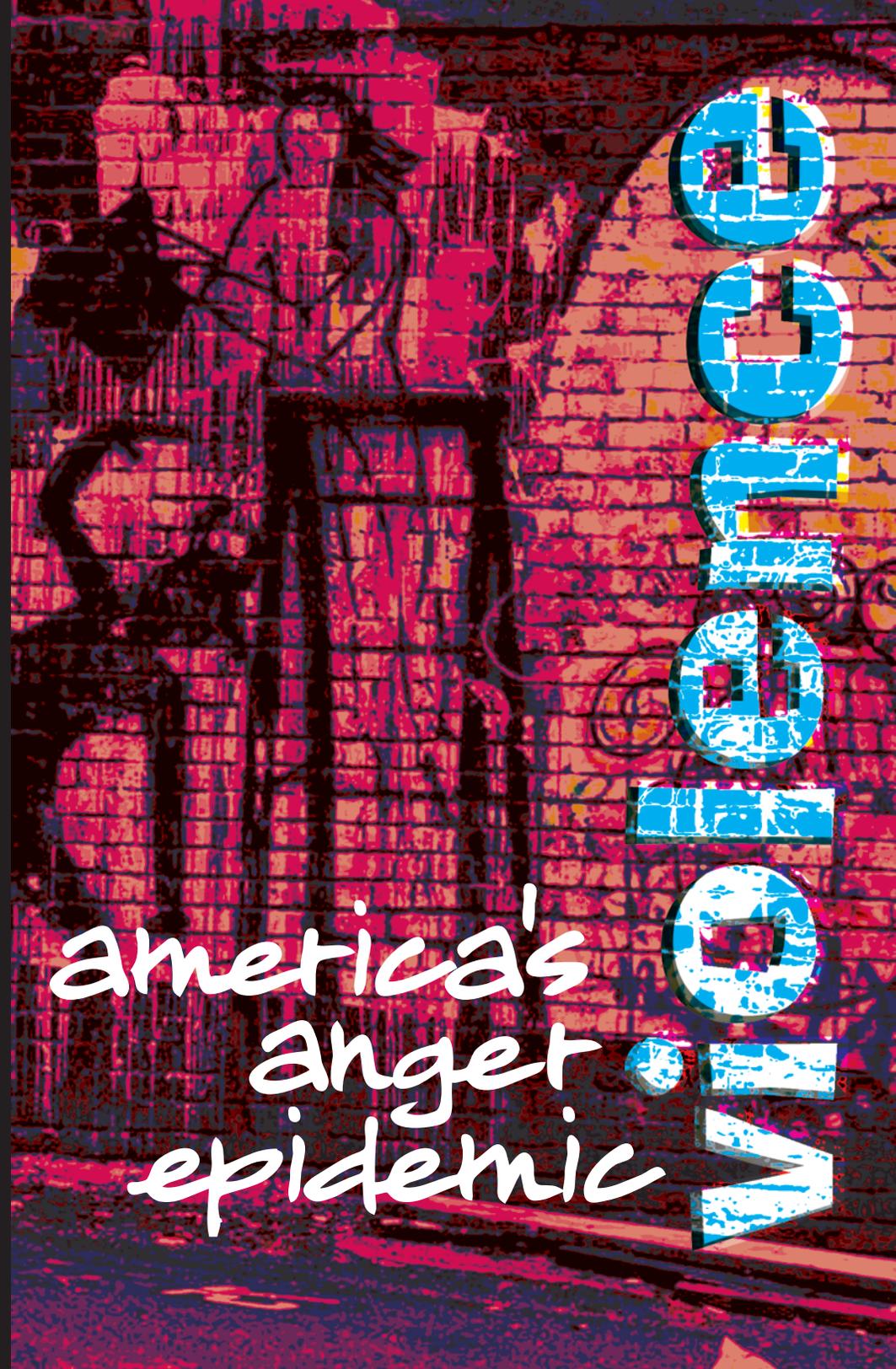
Please help us keep this program on the air. Your tax deductible gift allows us to reach thousands of America's youth with rock solid answers. May God bless you and thank you for watching!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

The Al Denson Show
Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Toll Free 1-877-HOPE101
aldenson@aol.com



america's
anger
epidemic



When Al Denson speaks to students—more than 2,000,000 face to face—he comes with his own story of struggle and tragedy. In December 1994,

Al's much publicized, near-death experience in the crash of a small aircraft led him to a rare insight about the tenuous nature of earthly life.

With seven albums behind him and a string of #1 songs and awards that includes a Dove for "Best Praise Album of the Year", Denson's songs and messages to students from junior high through college continue to touch an ever-widening audience. In addition to his own performances, Al has been featured at crusades for Billy Graham, as well as many rallies with youth evangelist and radio talk show host, Dawson McAllister. His new TV show, "The Al Denson Show", is seen by millions on TBN. The program targets and involves youth and the issues they face every day.

Write Al at:
Box 220
Grapevine, TX 76099
Email: aldenson@aol.com
Website: www.aldenson.com

America's Anger Epidemic

There is an epidemic in our country that is more widespread than the AIDS virus, and just as deadly. Violence, especially among America's teenagers, is on the rise at an alarming rate. Cities like Pearl, Jonesboro, Paducah, and now Littleton were virtually unknown a few, short years ago, but sadly now are infamous everywhere.

In January 1999, the state of Texas alone had 126 juveniles being held in Texas Youth Commission facilities for murder.

This figure did not include those minors certified to stand trial as adults. Nationwide, homicide is the second leading cause of death for minors. What is happening? Why is it happening?

Some experts hypothesize that the violence we are seeing is the result of parental abuse, or parental indifference. Peter Sheras, University of Virginia professor and associate director of the Virginia Youth Violence Project,

says that parental neglect is just as devastating as parental abuse. Too often kids will turn to gangs to provide the sense of belonging, respect, and security that they have not found in their families.

Many point to the media, to television, movies, music, and video games as having desensitized teens to violence. Prosecutors, police, and psychologists can offer valuable insights, but most admit they have no real answers.

It is often said that "the problem is usually not the problem." I believe that the violence that is spreading across our country is only the symptom, or the outward expression, of the real problem, which is an epidemic of anger. People destroying people when they go to extremes in their outward demonstrations of anger, and people destroying themselves when they go to extremes with their inward demonstrations of anger.

Too often kids will turn to gangs to provide the sense of belonging, respect, and security that they have not found in their families.

Anger can motivate a person to ridicule, laugh at, criticize, get even with, curse, humiliate, or fight another person. Left undealt with, anger can go on to cause that same person to hate, hurt, damage, ruin, demolish, or annihilate another person. When anger is ignored, it causes our world to become distorted. It clouds our judgement and our perception of everything

and everyone around us.

Please don't misunderstand. Anger is not a sin. In fact, it is a God-given emotion. In Ephesians 4:26-27, the Bible makes it very clear that we are given two commands. Do be angry, but don't sin. Paul is saying in these verses that while it is normal to experience anger, we CAN choose to express that anger in ways that are not sinful.

ANGER is one of the most powerful emotions a human can have.

The choice is ours. We can choose to express our anger in healthy or in unhealthy ways, in ways that heal or in ways that hurt. We can be angry and sin, or we can be angry and not sin. Whether or not we sin has nothing to do with the emotion of anger, but how we choose to express that emotion.

In other words, it is O.K. to BE angry, it just isn't O.K. to STAY angry.

When you start camping-out with your anger, there is a downward spiral that begins to take place:

ANGER
RESENTMENT
HOSTILITY
RAGE
VIOLENCE

Anger is one of the most powerful emotions a human can have. Whenever we experience anger, a dose of adrenaline is pumped into our systems. When our anger reaches the stage of hostility and then rage, it is like a triple dose of adrenaline. Over time, it is possible to become addicted to the rush that comes from rage or violent acts.

When something bad happens, anger is not the feeling you experience first. Anger is born out of **Fear, Frustration, Hurt**, or some combination of the three. Anger is really about **UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS**:

- a) **Frustration** from not receiving what we had **expected** from other people or from life.
- b) **Hurt** when we don't hear the words or receive the actions we **expected**.
- c) And **Fear** because either we **expect** something bad to happen, or fear that what we want to have happen won't. It really is a control thing. We don't like being fearful because it makes us feel out of control, so we use anger to cope with our fears.



Anger left undealt with in our lives can have some serious consequences:

1. It can cause physical problems: backaches, headaches, neck aches. Chronic hostility has also been linked to ulcers, stomach, and digestive problems, as well as heart disease.
2. Another consequence of undealt with anger is a lowered sense of self-worth. The cycle of anger and low self-value feeding off each other produce all kinds of problems. The greater the pain we carry inside, the greater the temptation to engage in addictive behaviors (drugs, alcohol, sex, food, work, etc.) to get relief, even if it is only temporary relief.
3. Anger can take many forms. It is not always aggressive and explosive. A person can be passive, detached, or sarcastic, but it is still anger. You can recognize it in someone who has great difficulty letting people get close, because they will only let others in so far. Anger will block your ability to give and receive love, and this is misery for those that do love you because they just can't seem to please or get close to you.
4. Anger will not only distance you from people, but it will distance you from God, as well. He offers us an intimate, loving, close, personal relationship, but that will be very hard for you to enjoy or even accept, if anger has darkened and hardened your heart.

Unresolved anger is that videotape of past offenses that keeps playing over and over in our minds, doing tremendous damage to us and to everyone around us. Unresolved anger can imprison us, bind us, make us miserable, and miserable to live with.

One of the deepest needs that humans have is to know that someone understands their pain. Many times anger escalates into violence because a person feels that there is no one in their life who understands how deeply they hurt. They inflict pain on others so others will feel their pain and hurt with them.

Violent acts can also result when a person believes that their failures are the fault of someone else. They feel that others are to blame for their pain, and that the guilty parties must be punished to even the score. Anger left to fester in our lives can warp and distort our thinking and lead to terrible consequences.

Remember, after a hurtful, fearful, or frustrating experience, we can move in one of two directions: toward getting better or getting bitter. **YOUR CHOICE**. When we ignore or justify our anger, we are denying what is really underneath the anger which is the fear, frustration, or hurt. If we allow our anger to grow into resentment, hostility, and rage, then we will never deal with the real issues, and we limit God's ability to bring healing in our lives.

So what then is the solution? I think God has the answer for parents and for teens.

LET'S FIRST LOOK AT WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY TO PARENTS:

In **Ephesians 6:4** and **Colossians 3:21**, Paul cautions parents not to “**provoke**, which means **exasperate, or embitter**” their children to anger...lest they become discouraged.” In other words, “**Don't overcorrect them, or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated.**”

Paul is not saying here that we should never do anything about which our kids will feel angry. A person's anger is their own responsibility. We are not in charge of controlling our children's anger anymore than they are in charge of controlling ours. No one can “make” you angry.

There are three Greek words for anger in the New Testament. The word used for anger here (perigismos) is referring to anger that is **forced to exist beneath the surface**.

How do we as parents PROVOKE this kind of suppressed anger? We can do this in several ways:

1. Not allowing kids to express their anger. It is our job to teach them appropriate ways of expressing anger, but they must be allowed to do it.
2. Living with double standards in the home.
3. Speaking, thinking, and feeling for our kids. Discounting or minimizing their feelings.
4. Violating their boundaries. Not respecting their privacy. Forcing a “yes” from them because we are more concerned about what others think of us as parents. (Children should not have to act appropriately so we can feel like a valuable person. It isn't their job to validate us as parents with their performance).
5. Turning a deaf ear. They deserve to be heard and respected, and they deserve the right to state their case or defend themselves before being disciplined.
6. Being absentee parents.
7. Shaming our children by sending messages that they are an embarrassment to us, or that they are defective or worthless, thereby crushing a child's spirit.

Kids may respond to something they don't like in anger, but God NEVER wants the anger to be provoked by parents.

Dr. Gary Smalley says that the most important principle in raising children is:

Increase Honor and Decrease Anger.

- We honor children by making them feel valuable, loved, and accepted.
- We decrease their anger levels by releasing our anger to the Lord daily.

What is honor anyway? Honor is simply a decision to place high value, worth, and importance on another person. We do this by viewing that person as a priceless gift, and granting them a position in our lives worthy of great respect.

We honor our children by loving and accepting them unconditionally, by listening, supporting, and encouraging them. We can love our children and mean well, but it is easy to treat them with dishonor and not even realize what we are doing, especially if that is the way we were parented.

We “**DISHONOR**” our children when we:

- don't allow them to think for themselves
- don't let them speak their mind
- regard their feelings as unimportant
- avoid spending time with them
- disrespect their individuality
- speak harshly to them
- tell them or act like their opinions don't matter
- take them for granted
- are rude to them in front of others
- dismiss their needs as unimportant
- don't admit when we are wrong
- don't say we're sorry and ask for forgiveness

...**decrease their anger levels by releasing our anger to the Lord daily.**

FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING

The signs that a child is being dishonored can begin to show up at a very young age. If this continues into the teen years, the symptoms of dishonor get more serious. Dr. Smalley says that a teenager who is dishonored will begin to:

- develop an argumentative attitude
- seek friends you disapprove of
- use disrespectful or bad language
- have facial expressions that constantly reflect anger or avoidance
- have repeated absences from church or school
- have lower academic achievement
- be resistant to discussing or agreeing on almost anything
- be cold and unresponsive to your touch
- avoid you
- often turn away in your presence
- show a lack of respect for your advice
- be highly critical of you
- begin to indulge in sex, alcohol, or drugs

He goes on to give some of the consequences of dishonor that can follow a person into adulthood:

- drug and alcohol abuse
- chronic lying
- procrastination
- extreme pride and self-centeredness (narcissism)
- workaholic and the need to achieve more and more
- vicious emotional ups and downs
- extreme submission
- unhealthy legalism
- severe withdrawal from society
- feelings of loss of control (anxiety attacks)
- stress-related heart problems
- homosexuality
- deep feelings of loneliness
- suicidal thoughts and attempts
- poor mate selection
- clinical depression
- sexual dysfunction in marriage
- poor decision making
- lowered career achievement
- outburst of anger
- low energy in accomplishing work tasks
- extreme self-criticism
- gravitation toward cults and fringe religious groups
- unrealistic expectations of self and others
- eating disorders

The choice to always respect and honor our children is one of the most important choices we will ever make, and the effects of that choice will be felt for generations to come. Remember, the more honor, the less anger.

GOD ALSO HAS A SOLUTION FOR TEENAGERS WHEN IT COMES TO MANAGING ANGER:

It is true that most of our anger begins at home. The emotional wounds that parents inflict, whether intentional or unintentional, are the deepest and most long-lasting of any that we can ever receive in life. I am not trying to minimize that fact. Many teenagers carry those wounds for the rest of their lives.

The first step in dealing with anger is to be honest about it. Talk to someone who can help, either your parents or another family member, a teacher, pastor, counselor, or any adult who is mature and wise enough to help you work through your feelings.

Secondly, ask God to show you what is really going on in your life. What is the real emotion is that has given birth to the anger you are experiencing? Is it fear, frustration, or hurt? Remember, “the truth WILL set you free”, but only if you are truthful.

Thirdly, you must understand that hurt will happen. That is a fact of life. The only

way those hurts can be healed is through **FORGIVENESS**. This is the KEY to dealing with your anger in a healthy, constructive way. Sadly, not many Christian teens know much about real, scriptural forgiveness.

Most of us mistakenly believe that forgiveness is a feeling and that we can't forgive someone unless we “feel” like it. **FORGIVENESS IS NOT A FEELING**. It is an act of the will, an act of obedience. Forgiveness is giving up our right to get even. It is making a decision not to

hold on to anger or negative emotions.

Some of us use unforgiveness as a tool in an attempt to control the behavior of others. It's a way for us to feel we have an upper hand by making other people feel like they must **EARN** their way

back into our favor.

A lot of Christians have a hard time with forgiveness because they believe that if they forgive, they are excusing the behavior, or letting the other person off the hook. **Nothing could be further from the truth**. Forgiveness is acknowledging that what was done was wrong and inexcusable, but choosing to show someone else the same kind of forgiveness God has showed us.



Colossians 3:13 says, “**Bear with each other and FORGIVE whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God forgave you.**”

How did God forgive us? With forgiveness that is **unconditional** and **complete**. We don't deserve it, and He provided it before we ever asked for it, or even knew we needed it.

Forgiveness is not a suggestion, it is a commandment, and God gives it to us for our own emotional health. When we have been offended, we experience the pain of the offense when it happens, but the initial pain of the wrong done to us is usually **quite small** compared to the pain of reliving the offense over and over again in our minds. Unforgiveness is like a tape recorder that rewinds and plays the hurtful experience again and again.

God knows that unforgiveness is also the soil in which bitterness grows. Bitterness is a poisonous plant with **deadly** fruit: depression, anger, hostility, resentment, rage, physical, mental, and emotional disorders, and the inability to love and trust others.

Bitterness makes a person **extremely vulnerable** to **unwise decisions** and **destructive patterns of living**. It is like a **cancer** of the soul that will go on to destroy you physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. This is a **highly contagious condition** that will spread down through generations, to your children and your grandchildren, if left unchecked.

Remember, there is a difference between people who get angry and angry people. Everyone will experience anger from time to time, but when expressions of anger begin to take over a person's life and become a part of their personality, acts of violence, either against yourself or other people, are sure to follow.

What choice will you make? You can't control what other people do, but you can decide not to allow the actions of another person to control or destroy your life. Life is too short and too precious to be wasted in anger and bitterness. God loves you and wants you to live life full and free.

**Bear with
each other
and forgive
whatever
grievances
you may have
against one
another.
Forgive as God
forgave you.**