Always Winter and Never Christmas

By the Rev. Dr. Ed Hird

This Christmas season, you will not want to miss the ‘Chronicles of Narnia’ movie ‘Voyage of the Dawntreader’. Since C. S. Lewis wrote it in 1950, tens of millions of copies of the book in over thirty languages have been sold.

At the heart of Narnia's first book ‘The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe’ is the abolition of Christmas by the White Witch where it is always winter and never Christmas. C.S. Lewis' alternate title for his book was ‘The Hundred Year Winter’. Not once in the past hundred years of Narnia was Christmas ever celebrated.

The White Witch, whose real name is Jadis, punished anyone who wanted the restoration of Christmas, by turning them into stone. The White Witch’s most memorable feature was her skin, as white as chalk, or paper, or snow. CS Lewis explains in the Narnia book ‘The Magician’s Nephew’ that the White Witch's skin was made that way by eating an apple from the Emperor's Garden at the beginning of Narnia.

In the midst of this bone-chilling winter, we are told about an ancient prophecy stating that when two sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve filled the four thrones as Kings and Queens of Narnia, the tyranny of the White Witch and her hundred-year winter would end. We are also told that one day the great Lion Aslan will triumphantly return to Narnia: “Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight, At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more, When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death, And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.” CS Lewis called Aslan a ‘supposal’ of what might have happened if Christ had come
to a world of talking animals and become one of them.

With the remarkable success of the ‘Passion of the Christ’ Movie and Tolkien’s ‘Lord of the Rings’ Trilogy, many have become more open to spiritually-oriented movies like Voyage of the Dawntreader. Many ‘Lord of the Rings’ and ‘Narnia’ buffs may not be aware that it was JRR Tolkien who helped lead his atheist friend CS Lewis to faith in the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

While teaching at Oxford College, Lewis formed a lasting friendship with JRR Tolkien. Lewis said to Tolkien that tales or myths are ‘lies and therefore worthless, even though breathed through silver’. ‘No’, said Tolkien, ‘they are not lies’. Tolkien went on to explain to Lewis that in Jesus Christ, the ancient stories or myths of a dying and rising God entered history and became fact.

Twelve days later, Lewis wrote to another friend Arthur Greeves: “I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ – in Christianity. I will try to explain this another time. My long night talk with Dyson and Tolkien had a good deal to do with it”. CS Lewis recalls going by motorcycle with his brother Warren to Whipsnade Zoo, about thirty miles east of Oxford. “When we set out, I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo, I did”. In his autobiography Surprised by Joy, Lewis commented: “In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God...perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England”.

This Christmas season, as you take your family and friends to see the Voyage of the Dawntreader, I invite you to discover with CS Lewis that Aslan is the Reason for the Season.

The Rev. Dr. Ed Hird, BSW, MDiv, DMin
-previously published in the North Shore News
-award-winning author of the book *Battle for the Soul of Canada*
-Click to check out our newest marriage book *For Better For Worse: discovering the keys to a lasting relationship* on Amazon. You can even read the first two chapters for free to see if the book speaks to you.
-The sequel book *Restoring Health: body, mind and spirit* is available online with Amazon.com in both **paperback** and **ebook** form. Dr. JI Packer wrote the foreword, saying “I heartily commend what he has written.” The book focuses on strengthening a new generation of healthy leaders. Drawing on examples from Titus’ healthy leadership in the pirate island of Crete, it shows how we can embrace a holistically healthy life.

In Canada, Amazon.ca has the book available in **paperback** and **ebook**. It is also posted on Amazon UK (**paperback** and **ebook**), Amazon France (**paperback** and **ebook**), and Amazon Germany (**paperback** and **ebook**).

*Restoring Health* is also available online on Barnes and Noble in both **paperback** and **Nook/ebook form**. Nook gives a **sample of the book** to read online.

Indigo also offers the **paperback** and the **Kobo ebook version**. You can also obtain it through ITunes as an **IBook**.

To receive a signed copy within North America, just send a $20 cheque (USD/CAN) to ED HIRD, 102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5, Canada.

– In order to obtain a signed copy of the prequel book *Battle for the Soul of Canada*, please send a $18.50 cheque to ED HIRD, 102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5. For mailing the book to the USA, please send $20.00 USD. This can also be done by **PAYPAL** using the e-mail **ed_hird@telus.net**. Be sure to list your mailing address. The *Battle for the Soul of Canada* e-book can be obtained for $4.99 CDN/USD.

-Click to purchase the **Companion Bible Study** by Jan Cox (for the *Battle of the Soul of Canada*) in both **paperback** and **Kindle** on **Amazon.com** and **Amazon.ca**

---

**Share this:**

---

**Categories:** Uncategorized  |  **Tags:** Anglican Coalition in Canada, Arthur Greeves, Asian, Atheist, Battle for the Soul of Canada, Christ, Christianity, Christmas, CS Lewis, Emperor's Garden, Jadis, Jesus Christ, Kings and Queens of Narnia, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Narnia Tales, Oxford College, Passion of the Christ, Reason for the Season, Reverend Ed Hird, Son of God, St. Simon's Church North Vancouver, The Hundred Year Winter, The Lion, The Magician's Nephew, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Tolkien Lord of the Rings, Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Whipsnade Zoo, White Witch  |  **Permalink**.

**Louis Riel's Parting Messages to Humanity**
“INTERVIEW WITH RIEL”

(Regina Leader Newspaper, Saskatchewan, Nov 19th 1885)

by Mary MacFadyen McLean (my great grandmother reporter)

“His parting Messages to Mankind”

“The reporter of the Leader having received the orders of the proprietor to see Riel before his death and have an interview with him, waited on Captain Deane who was suffering from a severe accident, and who said he would be most happy to oblige the LEADER, but he doubted if he could do so were he in charge, but his superior officer was there, and he had no authority to act without his orders.

“Who is he?” asked the reporter.

“Col. Irvine.”

“Reporter: “I fear Col. Irvine is not friendly to the LEADER, which, in the public interest has felt bound to criticize him. However I must not enlarge on that head with you. My marching orders were to ‘See Riel,’ whom it was understood desired to see the Reporter of the LEADER with whom during his trial he frequently communicated.” Believing it useless to wait on the gallant Col, I repaired to the Queen City of the plains and went to my lodgings where I had the ‘Materials’ with which I had long been armed in preparation for this crisis. When first the officer in command of the LEADER said ‘An interview must be had with Riel if you have to outwit the whole police force of the North-West,’ I resolved various schemes. I reflected what great things had been done by means of the fair sex, and I thought, suppose I enlist on my side the fair ‘Saphronica’ and get her to put the ‘Comthethes’ on ‘Irvine’s susceptible fancy, and let her represent the LEADER. Saphronica was willing. A young lady of undoubted charms and resolute will, she essayed the officer in command, and, strange to say, his sense of duty or his fears of the Government, were stronger than his gallantry and Saphronica utterly failed to corrupt the guard. But on this, the Editor in chief frowned. At last I hit on a plan of my own. Accordingly on the evening of my refusal by Deane, I repaired to my lodgings, put on a soutaine (liturgical term for a robe) armed my chin with a beard, put on a broad brimmed wide awake, and stood Mr. Bienveillee the ancien confesseur of the doomed Riel. I hung at my bosom an enormous silver crucifix and now, speaking French, presented myself at the Barracks. The guard made no difficulty, and I believe they took me for Pere Andre. Entered his cell, I looked round and saw that the policeman had moved away from the grill. I bent down, told Riel I was a LEADER reporter in the guise of a pretre, and had come to give his last message to the world. He held out his left hand and touching it with his right, said: “Tick! Tick! Tick! I hear the telegraph, ah ca finira, “quick, I said, have you anything to say? I have brought pencil and paper — Speak”. Riel: “When I first saw you on the trial, I loved you.”

Messages: “I wish to send messages to all. To Lemieux, Fitzpatrick, Greenshields. I do not forget them — They are entitled to my reconnaissance. Ah!” he cried, apostrophizing them, “You were right to plead insanity, for assuredly all those days in which I have badly observed
the Commandments of God were passed in insanity (passé dans la folie). Every day in which I have neglected to prepare myself to die, was a day of mental alienation. I who believe in the power of the Catholic priests to forgive sins, I have much need to confess myself according as Jesus Christ has said: “Whose sins you remit, they are remitted.”

Death: “Here he stopped and looked in his peculiar way and said: “Death comes right to meet one. He does not conceal himself. I have only to look straight before me in order to see him clearly. I march to the end of my days. Formerly I saw him afar. (O rather ‘her’ for he spoke him in French). It seems to me, however, that he walks no more slowly. He runs. He regards me. Alas! He precipitates himself upon me. My God!” he cried, “will he arrive before I am ready to present myself before you. O my God! Arrest it! By the grace, the influence, the power, the mercy divine of Jesus Christ. Conduct him in another direction in virtue of the prayers of Marie Immaculate. Separate me from death by the force the intercession of St Joseph has the privilege of exercise on your heart, O my God! Exempt me lovingly by Jesus, Marie, and Joseph, from the violent and ignominious death of the gallows, to which I am condemned.

“Honorable Langevin, Caron, Chapleau, I want to send them a message, let them not be offended if a man condemned to death dares to address them. Whatever affairs hang on you, don’t forget, ‘What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?’

“Honorable Messrs. Blake and Mackenzie, I want to send them a message. For fifteen years you have often named me, and you have made resound the echoes of your glorious province, in striking on my name as one strikes on a tocsin. I thank you for having contributed to give me some celebrity. Nobly take from me advice nobody else will dare to give you. Prepare yourself each day to appear before your God.

“The Vice-Regal throne is occupied with magnificence. He who occupies it is brilliant, and my eyes cannot fix on him without being blinded. Illustrious personages the qualities with which you are endowed are excellent. For that reason, men say ‘Your Excellency’. If the voice of a man condemned to death will not appear impertinent to you: it vibrates at the bottom of the cells of Regina to say to you: Excellencies, you also do not fail to hold yourself in readiness for death, to make a good death, prepare yourself for death!

Sir John Macdonald! I send you a message. I have not had the honour to know you personally. Permit me nevertheless to address you a useful word. Having to prepare myself for death, I give myself to meditation and prayer. Excuse me Sir John. Do not leave yourself completely carried away by the glories of power. In the midst of your great and noble occupations, take every day a few moments at least for devotion and prayer and prepare yourself for death.

“Honorable and noble friends! Laurier, Laflamme, Lachapelle, Desjardins, Taillon, Beaubien, Trudel, Prud’homme, I bid you adieu. I demand of God to send you the visit of Death only when you shall have long time desired it, and that you may join those who have transformed death into joy, into deliverance and triumph.
“Honorable Joseph Dubuc, Alphonse, C. Lariviere, Marc. A. Girard, Joseph Royal, Hon. John Norquay, Gov. Edgar Dewdney, Col. Irvine, Captain Deane, I would invite them to think how they would feel if they had only one week to live. Life here below is only the preparation for another. You are good Christians, think of eternity. Do not omit to prepare yourself for death.

“O My God! How is it death has become my sweetheart with the horror I feel towards her? And how can she seek me with an attention proportioned to the repugnance she inspires? O Death, the Son of God has triumphed over your terrors! O Death I would make of thee a good death!

“Elzear de la Gimodiere! Roger Goulet, and you whom I regard as a relative Irene Kerouak, prepare yourself for death. I pray God to prolong your days, Louis Schmidt, I ask of the good God to enable you to come to a happy old age. Meanwhile prepare yourself for death. Listen to the disinterested advice of one condemned. We have been placed in this world only for the purpose of probation.

“And you whom I admire and respect, Glorious Major General Middleton, you were kind to me, you treated me nobly. Pray see in my words the desire to be as little disagreeable as possible. Life has been smiling and fortunate for you. General, if there is one thing I have appreciated more than being your prisoner of war, it is that you chose as my guard Captain Young, one of the most brave and polite officers of the army. Captain Young, Be not surprised if I send you a message through the LEADER newspaper which I understand with reconnaissance has not called out against me, prepare yourself all your days. Death also disquiets himself about you. Do not sleep on watch. Be over well on your guard.

MESSAGES TO FATHER CHINUIQUY

“And you whom death spares and does not dare to approach and you whom I cannot forget, Ancien Preacher of Temperance, Chinuiquy, your hairs are white, God who has made them white slowly, wishes to make your heart white right away (tout d’un coup). O be not angry at the disinterested voice of a man who has never spoken to you, to whom you have never given pain, unless it be in having abandoned regretta...
gifted with judgement, might have accomplished much; of one, who, had he been destitute of cruelty might even command esteem, and as I rode over the bridge and looked down on the frosty creek, and cast my eye towards the Government House where happy people were perhaps at dinner at that hour, I said to myself: "Why did he murder Scott? Why did he seek to wake up the bloody and nameless horrors of an Indian massacre? Why did he seek the blood of McKay and his fellow peacemakers? Unhappy man there is nothing for it. You must die on Monday."

Here as I passed near the trail going northwest, the well known voice of a home-returning farmer saying 'Good night' woke me from my reverie. In twenty minutes, I was seated at dinner. I joined in the laugh and the joke, so passing are our most solemn impressions, so light the effect of actual tragedy. Our emotions are the penumbras of rapid transitions of circumstances and vanishing associations and like clouds, we take the hue of the moment, and are shaped by the breeze that bloweth where it listeth."
The Reverend Dr. Ed Hird, BSW, MDiv, DMin

-award-winning author of the book ‘Battle for the Soul of Canada’

-Click to check out our newest marriage book *For Better For Worse: discovering the keys to a lasting relationship* on Amazon. You can even read the first two chapters for free to see if the book speaks to you.

-The sequel book *Restoring Health: body, mind and spirit* is available online with Amazon.com in both **paperback** and **ebook** form. Dr. JI Packer wrote the foreword, saying “I heartily commend what he has written.” The book focuses on strengthening a new generation of healthy leaders. Drawing on examples from Titus’ healthy leadership in the pirate island of Crete, it shows how we can embrace a holistically healthy life.

In Canada, Amazon.ca has the book available in **paperback** and **ebook**. It is also posted on Amazon UK (**paperback** and **ebook**), Amazon France (**paperback** and **ebook**), and Amazon Germany (**paperback** and **ebook**).

*Restoring Health* is also available online on Barnes and Noble in both **paperback** and **Nook/ebook form**. Nook gives a sample of the book to read online.

Indigo also offers the **paperback** and the **Kobo ebook version**. You can also obtain it through ITunes as an **IBook**.

To receive a signed copy within North America, just send a $20 cheque (USD/CAN) to ED HIRD, 102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5, Canada.

- In order to obtain a signed copy of the prequel book *Battle for the Soul of Canada*, please send a $18.50 cheque to ED HIRD, 102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5. For mailing the book to the USA, please send $20.00 USD. This can also be done by **PAYPAL** using the e-mail ed_hird@telus.net. Be sure to list your mailing address. The *Battle for the Soul of Canada* e-book can be obtained for $4.99 CDN/USD.
Managing Anger in Marital Conflict

by the Rev. Dr. Ed Hird

DPM 929 (a doctoral paper for Dr James Ponzetti submitted to Carey Theological College)

St Jerome, translator of the Vulgate, agonized over how anger destroyed his relationship with his aunt. He wrote: “Tell me, how are we two going to face the Day of Judgement? The sun is witness that it has gone down on our anger not one day, but for many a long year.” (Ketterman, 2000)
While St Jerome was obviously not married, his impassioned letter alluding to Ephesians 4:26 shows how vital it is to manage anger in marital and family conflicts.

Segrin, C. & Hanzal, A. (2009) observe that “no marital communication process has generated more scholarly interest than conflict.” This is probably because as Garland (1998) puts it, “Whatever a family’s style of communication, conflict and anger are inevitable.”

The social sciences and seminaries often function in an academic apartheid. Never the twain shall meet. Both are poorer for it. My aim with this paper is to integrate the best of the social science and theological research in how we can help our families more effectively manage anger in martial conflict situations.

It was noted in the DPM 929 class how marital conflict has had more social science attention than the anger component in marriage. Yet marital conflict involves many emotions, including both ‘hot and cold’ anger. Hebrews 12:15 describes cold anger as ‘the root of bitterness which defiles and harasses many’. Garland (1998) says that we must avoid allowing anger to take up permanent residence in our hearts. That is why anger, while encouraged in Ephesians 4:26, must be without sin or harming of others, and must not be taken to bed. Wisely Ephesians 4:26 suggests that going to sleep with unresolved anger gives a foothold for the negativity which sacramental Christians would describe in their baptism as ‘the world, the flesh and the devil.’

We know that anger can be expressed without sin because even the sinless Son of God in Mark 3:5 was legitimately angry at people’s insensitivity to others. The challenge is how in the words of James 1:19 to be slow to anger. Anger can easily take on a life of its own. Waddell (Browning, D. & Evison, I., 1998) wisely comments: “Nothing kills marital love more than hardness of heart.”

In preparing to write this essay, fifty-five books on anger and martial conflict from the Regent/Carey and the Public Libraries were either read or scanned. The overall impression is
Managing conflict, says Gottman (Garland, 1999), is one of the central tasks of maintaining a marriage. Gottman’s research was described both in class and in an article as the ‘Gold Standard’ of marriage research. The Gottmans (2006) recommend that we husbands need to embrace our wife’s anger and learn the meaning behind the emotion. We need to rediscover anger as a healthy emotion that has its own wisdom if we will stop being so defensive. Gottman’s evocative phrase is “Look for the longing in each other’s complaint.” Brain scans have shown us that we experience anger on the right side of the brain, unlike fear and sadness which is on the left side. While fear causes us to withdraw, anger can actually stir us to make a difference and bring constructive change. The challenge is how to harness the power of anger, much like people in BC harness the power of our mighty rivers for electricity.

Dr Gil Stieglitz, our past Coach for the Anglican Coalition in Canada, has been a major influence in helping our congregation become more proactive in strengthening and building marriages. Reminiscent of social exchange theories, Stieglitz (2004) says that love is meeting needs and that each marriage partner needs to aim to out-give the other at a 70/30 ratio. We have found his ‘Five Problems of Marriage’ videos and books to be very practical in helping our couples manage anger in marital conflicts.

Thirty-four years of ordained Anglican ministry have taught me that alcohol abuse has a huge effect on anger and marital life. Johns, A & Newcomb, M (2007) draw a strong research correlation between alcohol problems and anger-related marital conflict. Alcohol abuse has been scientifically linked with a much higher rate of physical violence during anger in marital conflict. One study quoted by Johns (2007) showed that the rate of verbal aggression was 5 to 7 times higher among such couples experiencing marital conflict. Since 1982, I have been privileged to do many AA ‘Fifth Steps’ which has convinced me that supporting people’s recovery from addiction is a key to helping them manage anger better in marital conflict. When feelings and pain are suppressed through substance abuse, the checks and balances around anger in marital conflict often disappear. The Bible describes this phenomenon in 1 Timothy 4:2 as ‘the searing of the conscience’. One of the reasons I strongly value the Twelve-Step process is not only for its helping people stop abusing substances, but also for its value in helping people manage anger and repair the damage done to marriages through past inappropriate anger.

It was reported by Vogel, D and Werner-Wilson, R (2008) that men are more likely than women to withdraw during marital conflict which results in wives feeling rejected. This withdrawal
causes emotional distance, loneliness, and a lack of romance. Ironically this is not about the husband not caring but because his over-caring makes him so anxious (Garland, 1998). The husband’s withdrawal is associated with increases in the wife’s blood pressure, norepinephrine and cortisol, all of which are linked to poorer cardiovascular and immune outcomes (Loving, T., & Heffner, K., 2004). Cortisol is a useful hormone in the short-term ‘fight or flight’ response, but is very destructive long-term to the white T cells which fight off cancer.

Stonewalling in marital conflict (Gottman, 1999) is one of the more serious indicators of future marital collapse. Faulkner, R., & Davey, M. (2005) observe that “women have considerable tolerance for physiological arousal and, thus, can maintain high levels of engagement. Men, in contrast, experience this arousal as being highly aversive and act to dissipate it by withdrawing from the conflict”. The tendency for men to withdraw seems to be linked with the higher tendency for men to physiologically ‘flood’ during marital conflict. When the heart rate goes above 100, the ability to rationally process marital conflict significantly decreases (Gottman, 2006). Gottman recommends the strategy of an agreed-upon ‘Time-out’ until the spouses can emotionally de-escalate. This gives the wife more security and hope for resolution rather than when the husband just shuts down and goes away without any context for readdressing the conflict later. Thomas Jefferson wisely said: “When angry, count ten before you speak; if very angry, an hundred.” (Tavris, 1992)

Marital anger for women (Cox, D & Clair, S, 2005) is often experienced as a threat to intimacy and connection. This results in many women internalizing their anger in the form of self-hate, obsessive thoughts, and guilt, which paralyzes their ability to constructively make use of the emotion.

Anger, even when inappropriately processed in marital conflict, has a number of payoffs. When we are hurt or threatened by our spouse, we tend to feel helpless and weak. When the anger emotion clicks in, it can give us a surge of strength, power and control. This need for control has been linked with some of the worst of the physical violence in marriage. In the Twelve Step process, we reverse the control need by admitting in step 1 that we are powerless over our condition/addiction/marriage. ‘Letting go and letting God’ is at the heart of true recovery. I am reminded of Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 12: 9-10 that God’s grace is sufficient for him, enabling him to realizing that when he is weak, he is strong.

Anger is associated with physiological and biological transitions, with the increase of our heart rate, blood pressure, adrenaline, and noradrenaline. The instinctive, natural way to express anger, says Spielberger (APA, 2009), is to respond aggressively. Assertiveness training has been developed as a more effective way of managing marital anger than either stuffing one’s anger or dumping it on others. I have read many books on assertiveness training over the years which have been helpful but sometimes lack the needed gentleness of the ‘soft startup’ recommended by Gottman.

Much of the 1960’s counselling encouraged couples to let it all hang out and dump our anger on the other spouse. Research has shown that this actually makes things worse. Garland(1999) comments that “anger expressed in venting becomes the first step toward murder, not toward reconciliation (Matthew 5:22).” Neither blowing up or clamming up really helps us manage anger in marital conflict (Cosgrove, 1988). Tavris (1982) found that “aggression frequently has
 precisely the opposite effect of catharsis: instead of exorcising the anger, it can inflame it.”  

Many people are afraid of marital anger because of its tendency to get away on us. Plato wrote “[when reason] is asleep, then the wild beast within us, gorged on meat or drink, starts up and having shaken off sleep, goes forth to satisfy his desires; and there is no conceivable folly or crime it won’t commit.”

Lambert, N. & Dollahite, D. (2006) reported that spirituality, especially practices such as prayer between a couple, is closely linked with reduced marital conflict. The shared vision and relation virtues such as selflessness and unconditional love have been linked with better marital functioning in times of anger and conflict. Couples indicated that their involvement in scripture reading and regular church attendance increased their commitment to relational permanence. Marsh, R. and Dallos, R. (2000) found that couples were able to increase their sense of interpersonal space by detouring their anger to God in marital conflict. In my pastoral work, I have found that praying together can really help a couple, though most find such activity too intimate. It is vital that the couple do not use prayer or the bible as weapons to win a fight, but rather as a way to resolve conflict and build a healthier marriage.

Mahoney, A. & Pargament, K. (1999) found the benefits of spiritual involvement as a couple to include greater global marital adjustment, more perceived benefits from marriage, less marital conflict, more verbal collaboration, and less use of verbal aggression and stalemate to discuss disagreements for both wives and husbands. Before my spiritual breakthrough at age 17, I viewed marriage as just ‘a piece of paper’. Marsh, R. and Dallos, R. (2000) observe that couples who view their marriage as being a sanctified object (whom God has joined together) are more likely to act and think in ways that protect their marriage. Part of the improved handling of anger in marital conflict comes out of the religious couple’s allegiance to their meta-narrative and their God’s ethical expectations. Even after thirty-two years of marriage, I still have to resist my tendencies to selfishness and irritability. My faith is a major motivator to keep working on myself.

Lambert, N. & Dollahite, D. listed studies showing that the value of forgiveness is linked with better managing anger in marital conflict. Gordon, K. & Hughes, F. (2009) identified three elements of forgiveness:

(a) regaining a more balanced and compassionate view of the offender and the event,

(b) decreasing negative affect towards and avoidance of the offender, and

(c) giving up the right to seek revenge or lash out toward the offender.

Ketterman (2000) observes that couples who refuse to forgive pay a heavy price:

“The physical costs of unforgiveness may include hypertension, chronic headaches, high blood pressure, cardiovascular ailments, and gastrointestinal disorders, to name just a handful. Because negative emotions have a depressive effect and can suppress immune function, unforgiveness may even have an indirect link to major and severe disorders like rheumatoid arthritis and cancer.”
Jesus’ words ‘forgive and you will be forgiven’, say Ketterman, lie at the heart of marital harmony and health. She speaks both as a psychiatrist of the Christian faith and as a victim of infidelity who remarried her husband. Forgiveness is indeed a practical proven key to managing anger in marital conflict.

Another key to managing anger in marital conflict is the reduction of blaming behaviour. Gottman (1999) calls this learning how to complain without criticizing. Gottman (1999, 2006) talks about the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling) which are greater long-term indicators of divorce than mere anger. Research by Madden, M. & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1981) showed that blaming one’s spouse for marital conflict is negatively associated with marital satisfaction. Couples that habitually blame one another are some of the most difficult to help.

Contempt has a major impact on how we manage anger in marital conflict. Day (2003) noted how “Husbands who were more extroverted were more likely to express anger and contempt during times of relational difficulty.” Gottman (2006) defines contempt as including “hostility or disgust (rolling their eyes). Contempt often involves sarcasm, mocking, name-calling or belligerence.” Contempt is the opposite of honour and respect. Steiglitz (2004) teaches extensively in his books and videos on the need for husbands to honour their wives daily, which he defines as ‘adding value’ and ‘putting them first above our other priorities’. He also emphasizes the need for wives to respect their husbands, which he defines as ‘acknowledging value’ by ‘finding and affirming his strengths in the sea of his weaknesses.” Such acts of love go a long way in repairing the damage done through what he calls our S.A.D. (Selfish, Angry, Demanding) behaviours that we may slip into when our needs are not being met.

One of the more recent emphases in marriage research has been to study not only dysfunctional couples, but also long-term successful couples. Matthews, A. and Hubbard, M. (2004) noted one study of 576 couples who had been married for 50 years or more. The three qualities attributed to such long-term success were trust (82 percent), loving relationship (81 percent), and willingness to compromise (80 percent).

Matthews and Hubbard also noted that the individualism of North American culture militates against healthy anger management in marriage conflict. They suggest that the way forward is to rediscover a theology of marriage that focuses on the common good, the value of community, discipleship and missional orientation. Marriage, said Matthews and Hubbard, ‘must have a purpose, a goal, a task beyond ‘being together’.

Osborne (1988) insightfully noted that “Marriage is the most rewarding and the most difficult relationship known to man.” As Gottman and others have observed, no married couples have been found to be free from anger in marital conflict. Gottman (2009) commented: “when Julie and I do our workshops with couples, one of the main messages we give is that we’ve found that really good marriages, people who are really happy, have terrible fights, where they’re thinking at the end of the fight: Why did I marry this person?” Some marital problems never go away, but the wise couple doesn’t get gridlocked on these unsolvable problems. The AA Serenity Prayer expresses this wisdom of ‘the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed.” David Mace, in Ridenour, F. (1989) notes how the Lauers studied three hundred marriages lasting fifteen years or longer. All the couples had times of anger and marital
Conflict. The key to these marriages was that they chose not to attack each other, but rather work on the anger. Mace (1986) compares anger to the squeak in your car's engine that tells you it's time for a tune-up. Anger can be your family smoke-alarm. In our DPM 929 Class, I was reminded how healthy marriages and families are foundational to the health and stability of our society.

How we interpret the meaning of anger in marital conflict is just as important as the conflict itself. Lester (2003) holds that

"the hermeneutical process is central to the experience of anger. Individuals and communities decide what is threatening as they interpret life situations through the lens of their own narratives – their values, meanings, and beliefs."

Our values and hopes for the future profoundly affect how we navigate the challenges of marital conflict. This is why Gottman, J. & Silver, N. (1999) encourage couples to explore each others' dreams and hopes, with an aim to create shared meaning. It is important that couples in conflict do not give up on their ideals and dreams. Higher expectations for romance and passion have been linked with increased marital satisfaction. Sometimes in a desire to get along, spouses give up something essential that actually fuels the romance and passion of their lives.

Positive affect (such as humour or affection) during marital conflict was the only predictor of both marital stability and marital satisfaction 6 years after the wedding. This has also shown to be true for long-term couples dealing with conflict (Gottman, J. and Driver, J., 2004). Positive affect cannot be faked but rather cultivated over time with a series of enjoyable events. As suggested in DPM 929, a healthy marriage has learnt to celebrate the ordinary not just the extraordinary. My wife and I handle anger in marital conflict better when we take regular time together for peaceful walks, for chatting and listening, and for physical exercise.

In Gottman's interview with Wyatt, R. (2009), he emphasizes the value of a soft-startup in managing anger in marital conflict. Many couples, commented Gottman, say to their spouses "The problem is you, and your personality, your character; you're a screw-up." Such personal "you message" attacks do not help couples manage anger better. Garland (1999) says the "I and we' messages of a soft start-up are "the difference between speaking the truth (Eph 4:25) and the judging of others that Jesus warned against (Mt 7:1). Carl Roger's active listening model has not born up under clinical research with married couples. It seems to be too demanding to expect one's spouse to act as a detached Rogerian therapist in the midst of marital conflict (Gottman, 2006).

Anger in marital conflict is handled better when there are approximately five times as many positive behaviours as negative behaviours. Couples in crisis usually only show a corresponding ratio of 1:1 (Gottman, 1999, 2006). The need for a five to one ratio seems to come from the greater emotional impact of negative behaviours on a marriage. Garland (1998) poignantly notes that "truth, especially when it leads to conflict, must be wrapped in words and actions that build rather than tear down love for one another."

Another well-researched principle for managing anger in marital conflict is the willingness to accept influence from one's spouse. Gottman (2009) says
“If you don’t accept some influence, then you become an obstacle and people find a way around you and you have no power.” This is an area that I have had to work on our thirty-two years of marriage. My wife reports that I have improved in this area. Sometimes it is hard to recognize our own stubbornness and defensiveness because it may be hidden in strengths like perseverance. Going for marriage counselling from time to time can be a real strength, though it is challenging to motivate both partners to be willing to go. We have many couples in our congregation whose marriages have been deeply restored through a willingness to do the hard work of going to a professional marriage counsellor. The particular clinical counsellor that we make the most use of in our church is Bonnie Chatwin who is both a nurse and a clinical counsellor trained at Trinity Western University. I have been invited in a number of times by Bonnie and the couple to co-counsel in particularly challenging situations. One of my greatest joys each Sunday is to see couples in church whose marriages were over, but they did the hard work with a counsellor that enabled them to find new ways to rebuild their marriages and to handle anger more effectively.

We have one couple in our previous congregation who were divorced for six years after an angry misunderstanding. The man kept on serving his wife in practical ways. The wife kept saying to me: “Some day I would like to marry my husband again”. Finally on Father’s Day 2002, they were both kneeling to receive communion and she said to me: “I would like to marry him again some day.” We married them that Sunday at the end of the service, and then remarried them legally later that week. I have followed up that couple with the Dr. Gil DVDs on marriage, and they are still together seven years later. This remarriage not only affected the couple but also their extended family and friends. Every restored marriage give hope to many others, especially to the younger generation that often lives together in a misguided attempt to avoid the pain of divorce.

I have seen some couples who refused counselling because they thought that it would be too expensive, only to spend far more on a divorce settlement. I can think of a case where a successful entrepreneur was so devastated by the divorce that years later, he is still trying to rebuild his life and his career. Bray, J. & Jouriles, E. (1996) confirmed that marriage counselling actually saves couples money compared to the costs of divorce and the medical costs associated with the reduced health of couples involved in marriage breakdowns. Sadly though marital counselling is cost-efficient, many insurance plans do not reimburse for martial therapy. Several couples I know have initially experienced great resistance from their insurance company over the area of paying for marriage counselling. Thankfully this was often positively resolved.

Sometimes Christian couples on the North Shore are suspicious of counselling in general, based on horror stories that they may have heard from others. Not all counselors have the same professional competence or sensitivity to the Judeo-Christian values. By the time that a man may be ready to go for counselling, the woman may have already emotionally detached years before. She may not have physically moved out, but she is no longer there. Both husbands and wives on the North Shore often stonewall each other as to whether they are willing to try out marriage counselling. Many men see counselling as an admission of weakness, neediness and failure. I see it as an act of great courage that will reap great benefits if the couple does not give up. Sometimes just when the couple are making progress in their counselling and the woman feels safe enough to finally open up, the man will pull the
plug and claim that the counsellor is biased towards the wife. “I will never go back to
counselling”, a man told me. “We will just live as roommates”. I encouraged this individual to
rethink his stance. Because many people on the North Shore are wealthy and successful, they
are used to getting their own way all the time. Dominating their spouse from a power position
does not work these days, especially as women have the ability nowadays to be financially
independent.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the work of Dr. Gottman and others who are offering practical
social science insights as to how we can better manage our anger in marital conflict. The irony
is that many of these research-based insights such as soft-startups, accepting influence,
forgiveness, and positive affection all take us back to the historic Judeo-Christian teaching on
marriage and healthy relationships.

The Rev. Dr. Ed Hird

-author of the award-winning book *Battle for the Soul of Canada*

-Click to check out our newest marriage book *For Better For Worse: discovering the keys to a lasting relationship* on Amazon. You can even read the first two chapters for free to see if the book speaks to you.

-The sequel book *Restoring Health: body, mind and spirit* is available online with Amazon.com in both *paperback* and *ebook* form. Dr. JI Packer wrote the foreword, saying “I heartily commend what he has written.” The book focuses on strengthening a new generation of healthy leaders. Drawing on examples from Titus’ healthy leadership in the pirate island of Crete, it shows how we can embrace a holistically healthy life.

In Canada, Amazon.ca has the book available in *paperback* and *ebook*. It is also posted on Amazon UK (*paperback* and *ebook*), Amazon France (*paperback* and *ebook*), and Amazon Germany (*paperback* and *ebook*).

*Restoring Health* is also available online on Barnes and Noble in both *paperback* and *Nook/ebook form*. Nook gives a *sample of the book* to read online.

Indigo also offers the *paperback* and the *Kobo ebook version*. You can also obtain it through ITunes as an *IBook*.

To receive a signed copy within North America, just send a $20 cheque (USD/CAN) to ED HIRD,
102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5, Canada.

– In order to obtain a signed copy of the prequel book *Battle for the Soul of Canada*, please send
a $18.50 cheque to ED HIRD, 102 – 15168 19th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 0A5. For mailing the book to the USA, please send $20.00 USD. This can also be done by PAYPAL using the e-mail ed_hird@telus.net. Be sure to list your mailing address. The Battle for the Soul of Canada e-book can be obtained for $4.99 CDN/USD.

-Click to purchase the Companion Bible Study by Jan Cox (for the Battle of the Soul of Canada) in both paperback and Kindle on Amazon.com and Amazon.ca

References


Crown Publishers Inc.


Ketterman, G and Hazard, D. (2000). *When I can"t say "I Forgive You"*, Colorado Springs, NavPress,


comes off as a cipher. It is the blonde gentle Jesus from the stained glass windows and Sunday School books. The problem with “Son of God” (besides the fact that it was already seen, in full, in mini-series form) is that Jesus, smirking throughout, is viewed as an illustrated pageant from his modest birth. This is more a pageant than a history about their reasons and characters; it truly is as brusque in its storytelling as an illustrated Bible.

This truth is clearly explained in John 10:30-35. In the passage it is obvious that the Jews did not mean that He was the offspring of God. This truth is clearly explained in John 10:30-35. In the passage it is obvious that the Jews did not mean that He was born of God. It does not mean that He was born of God. It does not mean that He was the offspring of God.

It is the blonde gentle Jesus from the stained glass windows and Sunday School books. The problem with “Son of God” (besides the fact that it was already seen, in full, in mini-series form) is that Jesus, smirking throughout, is viewed as an illustrated pageant from his modest birth. This is more a pageant than a history about their reasons and characters; it truly is as brusque in its storytelling as an illustrated Bible.

The Jews did not mean that He was the offspring of God. This truth is clearly explained in John 10:30-35. In the passage it is obvious that the Jews did not mean that He was born of God. It does not mean that He was born of God. It does not mean that He was the offspring of God.

From his modest birth. This is more a pageant than a history about their reasons and characters; it truly is as brusque in its storytelling as an illustrated Bible. This is more a pageant than a history about their reasons and characters; it truly is as brusque in its storytelling as an illustrated Bible.