

069 Accepting consequences of behavior with anger

Last week I wrote about teaching children to handle justifiable anger. It is important that children understand that it is acceptable to be angry at a true injustice done to themselves or others. However, many adults and children become angry about circumstances that do not justify anger.

When I was a counselor at the high school, students often came to me angry that a teacher had punished them for breaking a rule. The reason for the anger was that the teacher had let someone else get away with the same misbehavior without punishment. My approach to the situation was to remind them that their punishment was independent of the behavior of other students. They were being punished for breaking a rule. It seemed much like being stopped for exceeding the speed limit while others are not stopped. The person who is stopped has still broken the rule.

I think it is important to help children understand that people (parents, teachers, law enforcement officers) who enforce rules cannot catch everyone who breaks the rules. There will always be some unfairness, but that is not injustice. Injustice is being punished for something that a person did not do. Receiving a speeding ticket while driving below the speed limit is injustice.

Help your children learn to accept their punishment when they break rules. By doing so, you are teaching them that there are consequences for the choices they make. When they break a rule, the resulting consequences should not cause them to be angry.

There are enough reasons for justifiable anger in the lives of our children. Adding more anger because of unfair circumstances causes them to live with a continual attitude of anger. An angry attitude makes it difficult for our children to enjoy God's blessings.

