

set by others suggests just how difficult this task is for us today. If solid Christians at the top of their fields wrestle with how the Bible generates a grid for their work, so too must many others.

When reading this book, it might be helpful to keep the following principles in mind. To demonstrate sufficiency one must either (1) claim it in such a way that nothing else can make a similar claim; (2) show that competing interpretive grids add nothing to the biblical grid; or (3) show where competing grids fail at important points, leaving *only* the Bible to supply an explanation. With these three thoughts as a guide, I do recommend this book for the articles that are exceptionally good. They provide a model for how to think through the various questions, and they instill confidence that it is possible to do so. There is also value in analyzing the less effective essays to discern where they lose focus or derail in their thinking.

How to Help Angry Kids

Louis Paul Priolo (Alabama City: S.E.L.F. Publications, 1996), 231 pages.

Reviewed by Kaleen M. Chase

How to Help Angry Kids (hereafter *Angry Kids*) is the informative work of Lou Priolo, executive director of the Atlanta Biblical Counseling Center and N.A.N.C. fellow. It is thorough, biblically insightful and practical to issues pertaining to angry children. It's a book written by a parent to parents, particularly those "looking for biblical solutions to anger-related childhood problems"(x).

In this "tool kit" on angry kids, Priolo meticulously covers a great deal of biblical territory. In Chapters 1 and 2 he describes the angry child, and the parental provocations that often precipitate his development. He speaks plainly on the subject of parental discipline in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 he differentiates unbiblical (and often sinfully angry) forms of communication from their biblically-mandated counterpart. Chapters 3 and 7 answer the question, "What is at the heart of anger?" by explaining many of the attitudes that underlie it. In Chapters 6 and 8 Priolo sets forth a biblical methodology for getting anger problems

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right with God and others. He tackles the anger-related issues of manipulation and disrespect in Chapters 9 and 10. In Chapters 11 and 12 two simple parenting tools that are meant to prevent angry episodes in the parent-child relationship are recommended. In his final chapter, "A Good Investment," hope and encouragement are given to parents who are often overwhelmed by the time-consuming tasks of transforming, through godly discipline, an angry kid into one who instead "...yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness" (p. 214, Hebrews 12:11).

Contributions of the Book

The contributions of *Angry Kids* are many. For the sake of brevity, only two will be outlined here. The first is the painstaking attention to detail the author exhibits throughout the book. Although he disclaims it as "...an exhaustive treatment of angry children"(x), every page is filled to its margins with the particulars of angry kids. Lou Priolo captures what H. Clay Trumbull (p. 62) calls the "...essence of teaching." As a teacher to a pupil, with scriptural integrity and personal diligence, he has written a book principally focused on the objective of "...causing another to know" (p. 62) the predicament of and prescriptive remedy for angry kids.

Priolo uses many avenues to teach us about angry kids. He personalizes the subject with a vignette about Jim and Linda and their little "rebel" Joshua, which he utilizes throughout the book. He speaks to parents, and not just *about* them.

His extensive use of lists, whether it be one spelling out the behaviors expected of children living in God-centered homes (p. 14) or one stating the sinful forms of communication often employed by angry persons (pp. 73-75), help his readers by their clarity.

Angry Kids is replete with visual illustrations that are straightforward and easy to grasp. Figure 9, "The Biblical 'Pitcher' of the Heart" (p. 106) is one of the many simple, yet profound, visual images used throughout the book. It reminds us of the words of Christ when He said, "...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man..." (Matthew 15: 18,19,20a NKJV).

Finally, Priolo instructs us well because he instructs us biblically. He is

not given to airing his own opinions, and he rarely references the opinions of others. He attempts to make the Scripture plain, accessible and applicable to parents struggling to deal biblically with angry children. His frequent use of biblical references, as in Chapter 6 where he outlines anger's varied manifestations, adds depth and authority to the entire discussion.

Priolo's second contribution complements his first. Among his lists is one entitled, "Twenty-five Ways to Provoke Your Children to Wrath" (pp. 19-49). It is the "meat" of the book's second chapter, "Provocative Parents." Its page length alone should convey to parents its significance to the issue of angry kids. It did so with me.

The parental provocation that tops the list is "Lack of Marital Harmony." Speaking as an educator, I have found there to be nothing more detrimental to

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the character development of a young child than discord between his parents. Although the author does not address it directly, it is my experience that divorce, the epitome of such disharmony, often breeds the angriest of kids.

Another example from this list is "Consistently Disciplining in Anger." Here Priolo warns parents to guard themselves from applying "vindictive rather than corrective" discipline. In viewing their child's sin, Priolo reminds, "The emphasis of your thinking and of your subsequent discipline should be on what the child has done *by sinning against God*, and not on how his action *has caused you pain*."

Although space prohibits me from discussing additional examples, a biblical counselor will agree that their identification and removal is preliminary (p. 19) to any offer made to help angry kids.

As Priolo mentions at the beginning of "Provocative Parents" (p. 17), the Apostle Paul warns earthly fathers not to provoke (Ephesians 6:4) nor to exasperate (Colossians 3:21) their children. Also, the Lord Jesus, with a child enfolded in His arms, spoke these words, "And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:42). Parents who seek biblical counsel for an angry child

ought to take these sobering words to heart. They should examine themselves carefully in light of them, and in light of the provocations which Priolo has so carefully outlined for them. In my opinion "Provocative Parents" is the most substantial chapter of the book and is key both to the prevention of angry kids and to their biblical restoration. I would recommend publishing this chapter in pamphlet form to give to every parent seeking counsel for their angry child. It would help them to remove the plank from their own eyes, and then see clearly to remove the speck from the eye of their angry child (Matthew 7:5).

Shortcomings of the Book

The shortcomings of *Angry Kids* are few, and only one strikes me as potentially serious. In Chapter 8 entitled, "Getting Anger Problems Right With God," the author introduces a concept that is exegetically problematic. With James 4 as a backdrop, he states, "When our desires (as good as they may be) become so strong that they 'camp out' in our hearts, those desires (as good as they may be) become sinful, idolatrous desires; not because they are sinful desires (*per se*) but because they are desired *inordinately*. Our hearts covet them so intensely that we are willing to sin (war and fight) either in order to obtain them or because we are not able to obtain them" (p. 126). Although I can appreciate what Priolo finds worth preserving in making such a statement, that is, the biblical truth that God "...richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (p. 129, 1 Timothy 6:17), his preoccupation

in maintaining an emphasis on the "legitimacy" of the objects of inordinate desires overlooks the fact that once inordinate desires become inordinate their legitimacy vanishes.

In "Getting Anger Problems Right With God," Priolo is right in saying that children ought not love money, pleasure, approval and power *in place of* loving God. This is what the Bible teaches.

Among his lists is one entitled, "Twenty-five Ways to Provoke Your Children to Wrath."

However, he confuses the issue when he says that a child's desire for these things is not sinful *per se*. Although this is true, it is not helpful. Biblically, desires are always expressed in the context of living, where they are proven to be either pleasing to God or sinful. Furthermore, Priolo stipulates that the trouble with angry kids is not so much their desires in reference to these things, but the *intensity* with which they desire them. At least, *in emphasis*, he implies that kids sin in angry ways when their desires become too much of a good thing. This is biblically insupportable for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as portrayed in James 1:13-15, sin is born not of inordinate "legitimate" desires but of evil ones. Secondly, in Matthew 6:24 Jesus taught that to love God and money (or pleasure, approval, or power) simultaneously is impossible. Thirdly, the Greek comparative, *mallon*, present in a number of pas-

sages Priolo cites, is properly translated "rather than" or "instead of" when it is being used in a contrasting sense. Although semantically it can mean "more than" or "even more," this is not its appropriate rendering in oppositional passages. Finally, the author's supposition lacks the biblical characters necessary to support it. Nowhere in the biblical record do we find a solitary person who is capable of maintaining his love for God while *inordinately* desiring something else.

Chapter 8 is a weak link in an otherwise excellent book. Its weakness lies in its potential to incline parents into thinking that their little "rebel" has good, "legitimate" desires which are, at worst, a bit too aggressive. Priolo, instead of stimulating parents of angry kids to recognize that the legitimate desires held (the root) by their child will always find legitimate expression (the fruit), and that bad fruit comes from a bad root, has unwittingly drawn them away from doing so by his preoccupation with the matter of inordinacy.

Other limitations of the book include the use of transliterated Greek (*gymnazo*, p. 64), the psychological term "diagnosis" (p. 110), and the antiquated term "contentious shrew" (p. 123).

How to Help Angry Kids is an asset to any counselor's reference library. Personally, I enjoyed reading the book. I trust that the conscientious way in which Priolo has handled the subject of anger will bring biblical insight and practical help to all parents desirous of making an eternal investment in the lives of their kids.