



## Part 4: A Wock and a Hard Place

Early in parenthood, Andy and Sandra Stanley noticed a few things about the parents in their orbit who seemed to be doing a good job. Effective parents tended to have fewer rules, were not afraid of their children rejecting them, and facilitated their kid's interests, strengths, and talents. Effective parents also prioritized relationship over experience. But even more importantly, the best parents understood the practical applications of Jesus's commands that human beings love each other the way God through Christ has loved us, refusing to let the ups and downs of parenting stir up their anger unnecessarily.

### Start Talking

1. Think back on your childhood. What was the "biggest" thing you broke or damaged on accident? How did your parents react?
2. If you have children, what has been *their* biggest "uh-oh" moment of property damage so far?

### Looking Back

1. When were you able to embrace "relationship restoration" as the goal of discipline and conflict in your home this past week? What opportunities to do so did you miss?
2. What steps did you take to build a culture of "honor" into your home and relationships over the past few days?
3. Were you able to take advantage of chances to loan the people around you your strength instead of reminding them of their weakness? When?
4. Did you begin the process of taking steps to repair any relationships you've damaged by reminding people of their weakness in the past? How did it go? If not, what stopped you?

### What About You?

1. Why do you think we often characterize anger as a state foisted upon us by outside circumstances, rather than the process of expressing what's actually *inside* us?



2. What kinds of things tend to “stir up” your anger? Can you think of examples?
3. Have you found yourself unintentionally setting what Andy called, “Not Goals” in your relationships? What are they?
4. Are you easily angered? And when you are angered, do you tend to internalize it or externalize it?
5. Within the context of your family, what is it (generally speaking) that you are wanting but not getting, in moments of anger?
6. Relationally speaking, are you a record-keeper? Do you keep score and— on occasion— remind other people of the score? What drives that in you?

### **Look It Up**

*Read the following passages before answering the questions below: James 4:1-3, 1 Corinthians 13:1-5.*

1. According to James, where does conflict come from? What do you think about his diagnosis, here?
2. If conflict comes from our desires, what’s the prescription? After all— it seems unlikely that any of us are ever going to stop having preferences and wants.
3. What do you think is the problem with “record-keeping” in relationships? Why is actually damaging? What are its effects on each party involved?
4. Why do you think Paul actually means by the term “self-seeking?” Why is this in conflict with the nature of love?

### **Putting It All Together**

1. Where are you putting your desires and preferences ahead of the people around you? What kinds of conflicts is it causing? What would it look like to remedy that this week?
2. Where do you anticipate a temptation to be “easily stirred up” this week? How can you prepare yourself to own your part of the conflict rather than expressing your anger? What reminders can you employ over the next few days?
3. What can you do to be quick with apologies this week? Who in your life can hold you accountable on this?
4. When it comes to your family, what is your North Star? What is the organizing principle in your home? Obedience? Respect? Achievement? Something else?
5. What would change if you made an intentional choice to reorient your family around loving each other the way Christ loved us? How would it show up in day-to-day interaction?

