

Anger Management  
By Anna Falcicola

It all started out with Shelby. Shelby was a new girl in our class at Robert Middle School. She had a temper, and we could see it well! I guess I wanted to hang around with her because everyone else did. If I didn't, I wouldn't be with the "cool kids." After a while, she started to influence me. I knew it was my choice to hang around with her, but I didn't want to leave and look bad to the other kids. I remember one hot afternoon at recess break. Shelby had sauntered over to the water fountain to get a drink. (I couldn't blame her. It was one of the hottest days I could remember!) Anyways, we girls followed her there, and the minute we arrived, I smelled trouble! If I knew Shelby, she would angrily push her way to the front of the line of kids. If the kids didn't let her pass, she would yell her voice box away! Unfortunately, this was one of those times! She screamed, "What's wrong with you nuts?! Can't you give way to a girl about to die of thirst? Look, I'm more important than you!" We just stood there with our mouths hanging wide open. The kids in line quickly made a gap between them and the water fountain. Shelby wasted no time in getting her stolen drink and running off before the recess teacher found out what she did.

Anyways, this is one of the many examples of how angrily Shelby acted whenever anything didn't go her own way. Like I said, I got very influenced by her. Other people saw me changing. I began to get mad at people for the littlest of things. If something happened that I didn't like, I would roll my eyes and mutter things to myself like, "Poor me! Everything has to go wrong for me!" Then I would take my anger out on other people who did nothing wrong, just for the sake of letting my feelings out. My family especially noticed it in me, and finally, my mom and dad had to talk to me about it.

I can clearly remember that time! I was sitting at my desk in my room working on homework and drinking hot cocoa. All of a sudden, I heard a knock on the door. I was so absorbed in my work that it really startled me. I accidentally slammed my mug of cocoa [which I was about to take a sip from] down too hard on my desk and it broke! Cocoa was all over my homework, my books, my clothes, everything! Worst of all, my mug had broken! Just then, the door opened, and my mom came in. "I heard a loud noise Shannon. I-" she stopped abruptly. "What in the world happened?" she asked as she looked around.

"When you knocked," I said angrily, "I was startled and accidentally slammed my mug of cocoa down too hard on my desk! And you can figure out what happened next," I said accusingly as I folded my arms across my chest. "This all happened because of you!" I yelled. My mom stayed very calm during all my racket, but she was stern when she spoke.

"Shannon," she said slowly, "you need to calm down. Just because you had a little accident, doesn't mean you have to get all upset. Your dad and I have noticed a big change in you. Do you want to talk about it?"

"Not really," I muttered.

“Well,” Mom continued, “ I think we should as a matter-of-fact. You wait here while I go get your dad.” I sat down on my bed and waited nervously for my mom’s return. She came in a few minutes later, my dad following. Mom sat on the edge of my bed, while my dad sat in a chair.

“Shannon,” my dad began, “ I don’t know what’s gotten into you. You used to be kind and happy, but now it looks like you have changed, become ill tempered, angry, and you have lost a lot of self-control. Is there anyone at school that is acting the same way as you are? I’m asking because you probably are being influenced by them, or just one person, if that’s the case.”

I couldn’t tell Mom and Dad about Shelby, I thought. They’ll want to talk to Shelby, Shelby’s parents, my teacher, and even some of Shelby’s friends to get information on how she was acting, if they saw a change in me, and- Just then, my dad cut me short in my thinking. “Shannon,” he persisted, “you need to tell us these things, or Mom and I won’t be able to help you out.” I grudgingly gave in. I knew I couldn’t keep it from them any longer.

“All right,” I agreed. “I’ll tell you all about it.” We sat in my room for a half an hour while I told them all about Shelby. When I had finished, they just sat there for a long time in silence. Finally, Dad spoke up.

“Thanks for telling us, Shannon. I know it was hard. But Mom and I needed to know, because we want to lead you in the right direction. Don’t hang around people who you know can influence you in all the wrong ways.”

“Remember,” Mom said, “bad company corrupts good morals.”

“That’s right,” said Dad. I think I have an idea. Go back to Shelby at school, and tell her to look up Ephesians 4:31 in her Bible. Wait,” he said, another idea coming to him. “How about you look it up in your Bible first. Then you can get an idea of what it’s saying. I’m telling you, Shannon. It’ll help you, as well as Shelby.”

“All right,” I agreed.

“Great!” exclaimed Mom. “Dad and I will leave you, so you can look up Ephesians 4:31 in your Bible. You should do some thinking too,” she added as she and Dad got up and opened the door.

She was just about to close it, when I cried, “Wait!”

“Yes,” Mom said as she came back in.

“I’m really sorry for accusing you about the cocoa spill,” I said. “ I really shouldn’t have blamed it on you. I know I lost my temper. Will you forgive me?”

Mom smiled again as she gave me a quick hug. “I forgive you, Shannon. And now, you need to ask for God’s forgiveness.” Mom went out and closed the door. I got up and walked over to my bookshelf. I grabbed my Bible, and I looked up Ephesians 4:31. Then, I prayed to God and asked His forgiveness too. I had a lot of thinking to do, a lot of thinking. I did as my dad said. As I walked into my classroom the next day at school, I looked at the clock. I had five minutes to talk to Shelby before the bell rang. Shelby was sitting at her seat, working on her homework.

As I took my seat next to her, I asked, “Shelby, can I talk to you real quick?”

Shelby looked up quickly. “About what?” she asked dully. Then, I told her the verse my dad suggested for her to look up.

“It’ll do you good,” I said. “I promise. It helped me.”

“If you say so,” Shelby said as she shrugged and went back to her homework. I just prayed that she really would, and that she would see what the verse was trying to tell her.

The next day at school, I was walking out to the soccer field at recess break. All of a sudden, I saw Shelby. She was standing by herself in a corner of the outside of the school building. To my amazement, I saw that she was crying! I was really surprised! I had never seen Shelby cry before. I went up to her.

Before I could say anything, she exclaimed, “Oh, Shannon! I read the verse last night like you told me. I realized how wicked and angry and ill tempered I’ve been. I’m sorry for being such a bad example to you. Can you forgive me?” I was shocked that Shelby looked up Ephesians 4:31! What shocked me more was that she actually was starting to obey it!

“Of course I forgive you, Shelby!” I cried as I remembered how willingly my Mom forgave me.

“Now,” said Shelby said wiping tears from her eyes, “we can really be friends. We’ll both work on controlling our anger. And,” she continued excitedly, “we’ll both take the same medicine every day!”

“What’s that?” I asked.

“Anger management!” Shelby exclaimed.

17 years later...

“Shelby and I grew to be great friends, and even though we weren’t perfect, we still took Anger Management every day! We read Ephesians 4:31!”

“Wow!” exclaimed ten year-old Matt. “That’s a great story! I think I should take some Anger Management too! I bet it would help me control my anger!”

Shannon Parks smiled down at her fun, energetic son. “Yes,” she agreed laughingly. “And I think that Anger Management is the best medicine anyone can ever take!”