
Anger Management

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Have you ever been mad at God? Certainly, everyone has had anger rise up against a person. And there are a lot of people who are angry with themselves. Anger is a problem all of us have to deal with.

Many people come from backgrounds where strife was just normal. Our culture is so full of envy and strife that it's become part of life. We don't realize how deadly it is. But realize it or not, strife will kill you. Listen to what James had to say about envy and strife:

“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” (James 3:16)

Think about what this verse is saying for a moment. Envy and strife bring EVERY evil work. That is quite a revelation! You could be giving tithes and offerings and trusting God in the area of your finances, but if you're living in strife, you are opening the door to poverty. You could be trying to take care of your body and meditating on healing scriptures, yet envy and strife will negate all of that and bring sickness and disease.

No one who is trusting God for victory in any area of their life can ignore dealing with anger and expect to succeed. It's that important.

This doesn't mean we are supposed to be emotionless or totally passive people. There is a proper use of anger. If we don't understand this and try to completely do away with anger, we will not live free and productive lives, and we will become passive in a way that allows Satan to run over us. There is a godly purpose for anger.

Godly Anger

Think of this: Every person on the planet has a temper. Why do you think that is? Do you think the devil created anger? No way! Satan never created anything. He doesn't have the power to create. All he does is pervert the godly things God created.

It's God who gave us the capacity to get angry. Anger has a godly function. But with most of us, it's been perverted.

We don't need to get delivered of a temper; we need to learn how to manage that anger and direct it the way God intended — not toward people, but toward the devil and evil.

There is a well-known passage of Scripture that talks about a positive use of anger. Yet this passage is most often interpreted in a way that loses the true intent of what Paul was saying. Ephesians 4:26-27 says,

“Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”

This is usually interpreted as, “God knows you are only human, and you will sometimes get angry. That just happens. But it doesn't become sin unless you let it persist. So make sure you confess and forsake your anger every night before you go to bed.”

There is no doubt that getting over anger quickly has great benefit. Confessing and forsaking anger before you go to bed every night is a good thing to do. But that is not what this verse is teaching. It's nearly the opposite.

Paul is saying there is a godly anger that is not sin. God gives us a command to get angry with a righteous anger.

Then he says, “Let not the sun go down on your wrath”. What happens when the sun goes down? Typically we stop working. The day winds down, and we rest and go to sleep. Paul is saying, “Don’t let this godly anger ever stop working. Keep it awake. Stir it up and keep it active!” Then verse 27 continues, “Neither give place to the devil”. If we don’t keep a godly anger active within us, we are giving place to the devil. What a revelation!

There is a righteous use of anger. Not understanding this has rendered many Christians so passive, they don’t get mad at the evil in this world. Therefore, Satan is having a free shot at everything we hold dear and holy.

Our society is under attack, and our righteous anger that God has given us as a weapon is kept in its sheath and not used. This needs to change. Look at what the Word of God has to say about a right use of anger:

- “You who love the Lord, hate evil!” (Psalm 97:10)
- “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” (Prov. 8:13)
- “The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalm 111:10)
- “The fear of the LORD [is] the beginning of knowledge.” (Prov. 1:7)
- “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.” (Romans 12:9)

These are just a few of the scriptures that speak of a righteous use of hate and anger. Look again at Proverbs 8:13: “Pride and arrogance, and the evil way, and the perverse mouth, do I hate”.

Do we really hate those things? We should, but Christians as a whole do not hate evil. We don’t like evil, but few would argue that we literally hate these things. Some Christians don’t believe that we are supposed to hate anything, but that’s not what God’s Word says.

Jesus was sinless, but He had hate and anger.

In John 2:14-17, which took place at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and then in Mark 11:15-17, which took place the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry, Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. He didn’t approach them meekly and say, “Guys, I’m sorry. I don’t want to hurt any of you, but I have to do this to obey my Father.” NO! He made a whip and beat the people and animals and turned over their tables. He was mad.

Where were the temple guards? I’m sure they were there, but Jesus was in a holy rage that paralyzed them from action. It’s certain that Jesus never sinned, but it’s also certain that He got very angry to the point of action. Therefore, there is a righteous anger. We need to discover the righteous use of anger and channel all of our aggression in the proper way.

So, there is a right place for anger. But what about the wrong use of anger? All of us have to deal with getting mad at people. How do we overcome our unforgiveness and anger toward people?

UNGODLY ANGER

Have you ever prayed that the Lord would remove someone from your life who makes you angry? Have you ever prayed that your circumstances would change so that you would be delivered from those things that make you mad? If you have, you are not alone. But it’s not what others do to you that makes you angry. You will never be able to remove all aggravating things and people from your path. That’s unrealistic. Satan has more than enough people under his control to keep an endless parade of annoying people coming across your path.

You can't always change circumstances, and you don't have the authority to change others. But you can change what's on the inside of you that makes you angry. That's right.

Our anger comes from the inside, not the outside.

I know most people don't like that. At first, it's comforting to think that it's what someone else did that made you angry, but that's not true. If what other people do makes you angry, then you will always be angry because there will always be someone that treats you wrong. That makes you a victim and not a victor.

Accepting responsibility for your ungodly anger puts you in the driver's seat. You only have total authority over yourself. You are the only one that you can really change. If you are trying to remove all the people and things that make you mad from your path, you will never win. But if you deal with the things inside you that cause your anger, you will never lose, regardless of what others do. That's the example that Jesus gave us. He was able to look at the very ones who crucified and mocked Him and say,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". (Luke 23:34)

Jesus not only suffered more than any of us ever have, He suffered more unjustly than we have. As God, He could have come off the cross at any time and wiped all of His accusers out. Yet He humbled Himself and even forgave His enemies.

Some people think, "Well that was Jesus. I'm certainly not Jesus." But Jesus wasn't the only one who forgave those who wronged him. Stephen acted just like Jesus in Acts 7:60. As he was being stoned to death, he knelt down and cried with a loud voice:

"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep".

Paul commanded us to do the same thing in Ephesians 4:32, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."

Not only are we supposed to resist anger, but we are commanded to forgive those who trespass against us. We can't control others, but we can control what's inside of us that makes us angry. The key is found in Proverbs 13:10: "By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom."

It's not what others do to us that makes us angry; it's the pride inside of us that causes us to get mad.

I know that's not what most people believe, but that's what God's Word says. This verse doesn't say that pride is one of the major reasons for anger — it's the only reason. What a statement!

I ministered this in Pueblo, Colorado, many years ago, and a man came up to me after the meeting and said, "I've got a lot of problems, but pride isn't one of them. If anything, I have such low self-esteem that I hate myself. Yet I have a lot of anger. I just don't understand how my pride is the source of my anger." What this man was missing was a proper definition of pride.

Many people think of pride only as arrogance. But that's only one manifestation of pride. Timidity and shyness are extreme manifestations of pride.

Pride, at it's core, is simply self-centeredness or selfishness.

Timid and shy people are extremely self-centered people.

I know this to be true because I was an introvert. I couldn't look at people in the face and talk to them. I was so consumed with me that I was always thinking, "What are they going to think of me? Am I going to make a mistake and look foolish?" That self-centeredness made me shy.

If you have a testimony about what the Lord has done for you that could help someone, yet you would be timid about getting on radio or television and sharing it because everyone would be looking at you, then you have some pride issues that haven't been settled. You may not be called to broadcast on radio or television the way I am, but we are all called to:

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” (1 Pet. 3:15)

So, pride is not only thinking we are better than others; pride can be thinking we are worse than others or just being self-conscious. It doesn't matter if self is always exalting itself or if it's debasing itself. It's all self-centeredness, which is pride.

Like it or not, understand it or not, pride is the source of all of our anger. As we deal with our own self-love, anger toward others will be defused. The only reason we are so easily offended is because we love ourselves so much. As we die to ourselves, we will be able to love others the way that Jesus did.