

12. Anger

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Among many naive people, tree huggers, left-over hippies from the 60s and 70s, and liberals, there is a buzz word – peace. While they say, “Peace,” they stick up their index and middle fingers as a sign of peace. Actually, it shows that they have no idea where that sign came from and what it meant originally.

The originator of the ‘V’ sign was Sir Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister of United Kingdom during the World War II. What he meant to the people who followed him during that difficult time in England was V for ‘Victory’, not ‘Peace’. You don’t get to have victory and peace by having idle chats and singing Kumbaya with your enemies.

In my opinion, the real opposite word of peace would be ‘anger’. War and fight do not start with an empty emotional background. Anger has to be involved. The red-neck word for ‘Anger’ is ‘ticked off’. When a person gets ticked off, many facets of emotion can come out of the person which the people around him may not have seen before.

The Bible deals with anger extensively, especially in this Book of Proverbs. Some people just fly off the handle and don’t care about what might happen to others. The only thing that matters to them is that they are mad and it has to come out somehow at all cost. On the other hand, some people bottle up and walk away – some even never return to their families or make enough damages to regret throughout their lives.

We are going to look at this common topic for just about everyone in this room from four different angles: Why do we get angry?; When is it right to be angry?; When is it wrong to be angry?; and How can we control anger?

A. WHY DO WE GET ANGRY?

Galatians 5:16-25 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Many people, especially secular psychologists, insist that anger must be expressed no matter what. The people with anger problem say, “I am what I am. Take me or leave me.” In that case, we’d rather leave you.

The Bible teaches us that we as born-again Christians should control our anger, strife and wrath – these three are considered as ‘outburst of anger’. Bitterness and resent-

ment are actually more harmful than outburst of anger, because it will last longer, and it will eat the person alive from inside out.

Here are six reasons why we get angry:

1) It is natural for us to get angry when we think that we are offended.

Does it mean that getting angry is wrong no matter what? Absolutely not. God gets angry, but He doesn't sin.

Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

2) The devil and his cohorts want to use our own emotion against us.

The demonic force is out there to bring out the worst of us.

James 3:14-16 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Even if all the demons in the world entice you to throw your temper tantrum around, you still have a choice not to. We will talk about how to control our anger later. I am sure that many of you have seen the bumper sticker says, "Don't get mad, get even." That might be OK with unbelievers, but for the believers of Jesus Christ, it is NO, NO.

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

3) The people who choose not to have godly wisdom will display outbursts of anger or deep bitterness and resentment.

Proverbs 11:12 He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, But a man of understanding holds his peace.

Proverbs 14:29 He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.

There is nothing to be proud of having a short fuse. It only shows that the person with a short fuse is lacking godly wisdom. Do not pass your blame to your ancestral heritage. You make your own choice to have outbursts of anger.

4) The person who cannot rule his own spirit becomes a sitting duck of demonic attacks.

Proverbs 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

Proverbs 25:28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.

Some of you may have these kinds of tendencies: When you get angry, nothing matters – you throw things around, you bang cabinet doors, slam shut bedroom doors, you say mean things to your loved ones that you'd regret later. You even blame God for whatever is happening or is not happening. In the meanwhile, your loved ones don't know what to do, or they hide themselves from your angry presence. After you settle down, you are embarrassed and now angry at yourself for losing your temper again.

Why does this happen? Because you do not rule your own spirit and your protection of the emotional walls are broken down. By allowing your emotional and spiritual wall to come down, now you are extremely vulnerable to the demonic attacks.

5) We often allow our jealousy to get the worst of us.

Proverbs 27:4 Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?

Yes, the Bible says that God is jealous for us. It is for our safety and well-being. But in our cases, the majority of our jealousy comes from our selfish and ungodly motives. And it is a sin.

6) We get angry because our pride stirs up our emotion.

Proverbs 13:10 By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.

This issue runs along with jealousy. When some of us don't get their way, they get mad.

B. WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO BE ANGRY?

Is it ever right to be angry? Of course, whenever I am angry, it is always right, amen? NOT!

1) It is always right to be angry at the people or things that stand against the righteousness of God.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Mark 3:5 And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

There are people who knowingly would do anything to go against God's righteousness. We can be angry at their unrighteous actions and their ungodly hearts.

2) It is right to be angry at the issues of the people that harm others for their selfish gains.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Living in this politically correct world, we get to see so many wrongs become considered as rights – homosexuality, abortion, representing Islam as a peaceful religion, etc.

C. WHEN IS IT WRONG TO BE ANGRY?

1) When we are seeking a revenge.

Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Here I have to make a clear distinction between revenge and self-defense. Some people would say, "You are not supposed to fight back when somebody tries to hurt you. The Bible tells you to turn the other cheek." My answer would be, "You are a total idiot." Turning the other cheek that Jesus mentioned is about ignoring insults, not letting your hands down so that a bad guy can whack you on the side of your face with a lead pipe.

When Al-Qaeda attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon September 11th, 2001, the United States retaliated. Again, the liberals claimed that we should talk with them. Right!

2) When we don't have a reason.

Proverbs 3:30 Do not strive with a man without cause, If he has done you no harm.

3) When we get angry, because others are treated better than us.

Luke 15:28-31 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

4) When we are resentful and bitter

Proverbs 15:18 A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.

When a wrathful person gets mad, most of the time, they don't care about the truth any more, but getting their anger out.

D. HOW CAN WE CONTROL ANGER?

Here are some insufficient solutions:

1) Counting to ten

You might see some wisdom to this. But some people might have to count to 5 million. That is not the way God would deal with our anger.

2) Taking a cold shower

You might have to stand under cold shower for a long time, but still hopping mad.

3) Blaming it on someone else

Blaming it on someone or something else, except oneself. Like blaming George W. Bush for the bad economy, then the Democrats Congress, Senate and Obama wasted away \$2 trillion with the first stimulus in less than a year, now they are considering a second one.

OK, let's look at the true way to control our anger:

1) Don't ever try to justify your anger. You are wasting your time.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"?

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

We can find a victory when we admit our wrongs rather than trying to hide them. Remember, the root of anger is pride. When we humble ourselves under the mighty hands of God, He will take care of the things in His time in His way.

1 Peter 5:6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time

2) Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

After the Lord tells us to take all these horrible things out of our lives, He wants us to fill our hearts with the elements that comes from Him – kindness, tenderheart and forgiveness.

3) Speak softly and gently.

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

While you are angry and you speak harshly and loud, the response you would get is most likely the same kind of harsh and hurtful answer. This kind of conversation will not bring a good result, rather a horrible one.

4) Learn to overlook the transgression against you. In other words, forgive continuously.

Proverbs 19:11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.

William Arthur Ward, author of a fine book "Thoughts of A Christian Optimist" says, "We are most like beasts when we kill. We are most like men when we judge. We are most like God when we forgive."

5) Call out the name of Jesus and start to pray that He may give you His mercy and love for the ones who angered you.

To do all these from 1 through 4, we cannot rely on our own willpower and inner strength, because our willpower is like wax in front of a hot stove and our inner strength is like a piece of paper in front of a hurricane.

Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."