

Overcoming Anger

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thomas Jefferson said: “When angry, count to ten before you speak; if very angry, a hundred.”
- B. Examples of anger:
1. Marge had worked all day cleaning the ladies meeting she was going to have the next morning. She had even scrubbed the carpet, a job not for her husband. Feeling very pleased with accomplishments of the day, Marge sat in her kitchen drinking a much deserved cup of coffee. Suddenly the door popped open and in ran her nine-year-old son, Ted, who had been in school all day, chasing the family dog, Blackie. Marge couldn't believe her eyes as she sat frozen in her seat watching Ted chase Blackie through the living into the den and around and around the dining room table. After recovering from the initial shock of seeing the muddy tracks on her clean carpet, she exploded.
 2. Bill had been waiting in line for over an hour to buy tickets for a concert. This was one event he didn't want to miss. Just as he was about to step up to the window and purchase his tickets, a man stepped in front of him and proceeded to place his order. Bill blew his cool shouting at the line breaker.
 3. A newspaper carried an account of a father who had beaten his infant son to death. The father's reason for doing it was because the child made him mad when he cried during the night.
 4. A man was having his car filled with gas when the attendant started to use the name of the Lord in vain “Please watch your language,” the purchaser said, “I don't appreciate your talking about my Heavenly Father that way.”
- C. The emotion described in those four illustrations is anger.
1. Anger is sometimes a perfectly normal reaction; and on some occasions it can (and does) get out of hand and lead to serious (or sinful) actions.
 2. The challenge comes in how we handle our anger.
 3. Do you handle it correctly or does it rule you?
 4. Socrates, finding himself very mad at a slave, said, “I would beat you if I were not so angry.”
 5. **Illustration:** Two boys, named Gus and Gene, were taking turns spinning a top. They had but one top, which they spun alternately. As time passed they began to quarrel and soon became angry. Gene said, “It is my turn to spin the top.” Gus said, “You lie!” They started hitting each other in a great rage, and, in the fight, Gene took a knife from his pocket, and stabbed Gus, who died a few minutes later. One lost his life, the other became a murderer, merely to determine whose turn it was to spin the top.

6. Anger is not a laughing matter. It is a very serious emotion that must be properly understood and controlled.
7. **Illustration:** Fourteen year-old twin boys in Tennessee argued over some chewing gum. One stabbed the other to death.

WHAT IS ANGER? DEFINING & DESCRIBING ANGER

- A. Anger, like all emotions, is created by your thinking. Your thoughts push the anger button.
1. It begins with an event that you notice and the interpretation you place on it.
 2. The result of your interpretation is feeling and feeling leads to emotional action (in this case anger).
 3. This, therefore, makes it difficult to give a definitive definition of anger.
- B. Definitions of anger.
1. Anger is the result of emotional frustration or hostility.
 2. Webster defines anger as, “a hostile feeling of displeasure that may result from injury, mistreatment, opposition.”
- C. There are several words translated anger from the Greek.
1. **Orge** (noun). “Originally any natural impulse, or desire, or disposition. came to signify anger, as the strongest of all passions”
 - a. **Ephesians 4:31** – “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”
 - b. **Colossians 3:8** – “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”
 - c. **1 Timothy 2:8** – “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”
 2. **Thumos** indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings, an outburst of wrath from inward indignation, while *orge* suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view of taking revenge.
 - a. Orge is less sudden in its rise than *thumos*.
 - b. Thumos expresses more the inward feeling . . . *Orge* the more active emotion.
 - c. Thumos is translated wrath .
 - d. Origizo (a verb), means “to provoke, to arouse to anger.”
 1. **Ephesians 4:26:** - “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”
 2. **Matthew 5:22** – “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . .”
 3. **Luke 15:25** (The Prodigal Son’s older brother) – “But he was angry and would not go in . . .”

D. Anger occurs when our desires or purposes are blocked. The following words illustrate the various forms anger may take.

1. Anger may be **hidden** .
 - a. Psychologists tell us that most anger is concealed within the heart of man.
 - b. It is like a basketball submerged in water: sooner or later, if it is not properly handled, it will pop to the top.
2. Anger in many take the form of a **mild annoyance**. It may upset you when a person pops his gum.
3. Anger may be a **short outburst of resentment**. You may resent it for a few moments when someone cuts in front of you on a freeway.
4. Anger may be carried as **hatred** in the heart. **Illustration:** One man carried anger against a woman some twenty years because she embarrassed him one time in class. He was angry then but couldn't do any thing about it.
5. Anger some times takes on the form of **aggression**. People try to overthrow governments because they don't like their policies. etc. Children become bullies because of anger.
6. Anger can also manifest itself in **revenge**. A man let the air out of his neighbor's car tires because it was parked in his driveway.
7. Anger may be **explosive**.
 - a. This was seen in the case of the man who went into a rage and killed his boss because he was fired from his job. Rage is very dangerous.
 - b. Work-place shootings . . . School shootings, etc.
8. Angers is an **emotional capacity** God has given to each of us. Anger, by itself, is neither good or bad . . . It is how we handle it that makes the difference.
9. Anger sometimes is no more than a mild case of **irritation**. One lady confessed that she became irritated (angry) when the preacher went overtime in his sermon. Now why would I think of that example?
10. **Not all** anger is wrong or sinful.
 - a. Paul wrote, "Be angry and sin not." **Ephesians 4:26**.
 - b. The challenge is to know when to stop.

E. Many years ago Henry Ward Beecher wrote these fine remarks about the nature of anger: "There is an anger that is damnable: it is the anger of selfishness. There is an anger that is majestic as the frown of Jehovah's brow: it is the anger of truth and love. If a man meets with injustice, it is not required that he shall not be roused to meet it: but if he is angry after he has had time to think upon it, that is sinful. The flame is not wrong, but the coals are."

1. Anger, under proper control, can be a very necessary reaction. It can be used as a tool of communication to let others know how we feel about their conduct.
2. God gave us anger as an emotion for constructive purposes. It is only through His word and power that we can make the best usage of our anger.

THE BIBLE AND ANGER

As we have already noted, anger, in and of itself, is not bad or sinful. It is an capacity to feel because of God's creative work (Genesis 1:27-29). It was given for our good. This is why we must learn to properly control it.

A. First, it may come as a surprise to learn that anger is an attribute of God.

1. There are more than 500 references to anger and wrath in the Old Testament.
 - a. The Bible reveals that God experiences daily anger because of the evil actions of man.
 - b. The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 7:11** – “God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.”
 - c. The Creator of man is “emotionally” moved when His creation rebels against Him.
 - d. We, too, should be moved by the ungodliness in the world.
 - e. We must hate the sin and love the sinner. John 3:16
 - f. We must always remember that God's anger is free from malice, injustice, unethical and hasty qualities.
 1. Jehovah God is not an impulsive judge.
 2. The divine anger is to be regarded as the natural expression of His nature, which is absolute holiness, manifesting itself against the rebellion of man.
 3. This is why Paul wrote in **Romans 1:28** – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . . ”
2. **Hebrews 10:30** – “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

B. There are many examples of uncontrolled anger in the Bible.

1. **Cain** became angry and murdered his brother, Abel. Genesis 4:3-12
2. **Easu** resented Jacob for deceiving him. Genesis 27:41
3. **King Saul** committed many sins in his anger. 1 Samuel 18:8 – 31:4
4. **Haman** plotted murder because of his anger against Mordecai. Esther 3:5
5. **King Ahab** hated the prophet Micaiah and sought revenge. 1 Kings 22:8-27
6. **Jewish leaders** became furious at Jesus and began to develop a plan to destroy Him. Luke 6:10-11

C. The Bible commands us to properly handle anger.

1. **Psalm 37:8** – “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret -- it only causes harm.”
2. **Ecclesiastes 7:9** – “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.”
3. **Proverbs 15:18** – “A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.”
4. **Matthew 5:22** – “But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment . . .”
5. **Proverbs 19:19** – “A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; For if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”

D. The Bible reveals that there is an approved place for proper anger.

1. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was moved with anger when He saw vendors taking advantage of the poor (John 2:12-17).
 - a. This “make-a-buck” approach to religion, with its huckstering of religion for profit, was more than the Master could tolerate.
 - b. He was emotionally moved by the sight and made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the Temple.
 - c. The disciples were surprised by His actions: perhaps they remembered a passage from **Psalm 69:9** where it was written, “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.”
2. Paul gives us some very interesting remarks about anger in **Ephesians 4:26** - “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”
 1. Paul is saying that it is okay to be emotionally moved .
 2. But the challenge however, is to not let it move into the wrath zone.
 3. Our hearts in must be clear of all anger by sundown. You in may be angry but don’t let it cause you to sin .
 4. Anger must not become an obsession for the devil to use against us.
 5. He is only asking us to properly use our emotions.

E. The Bible teaches that we can control our anger.

1. This is not believed by some Christians. Members of the church have been heard to say, “I have tried but just can’t control my temper.”
2. **Proverbs 29:11** – “A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them.”
 - a. You can be angry without sinning.
 - b. With God’s help we can control our anger.
 - c. Tyron Edwards: “To rule one’s anger is well; to prevent it is still better.”
 - d. Seneca: “Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it.”

HOW TO CONTROL ANGER

- A. In order to win over anger you must have strong desire to do so. This is the beginning place. How strong is your desire to control your anger?
- B. Remember the tragic results of sinful and wrong anger.
Dr. S. I. McMillen, in his book *None of These Diseases*, says that “Anxiety places more stress on the heart than any other stimulus, including physical exercise and fatigue.”
- C. Remember you are not trying to free you from all anger. Some anger is healthy and needful. Not all anger is sinful.
- D. Practice **James 1:19**: “. . . Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”
- E. Don’t internalize your anger. This is like a pressure cooker: sooner or later the lid will blow off. Anger must be handled in a Biblical manner.
- F. Prayerfully confront others who may be involved in your problem. This is not to blame them but to use them as part of the solution.
- G. Ask yourself: “Why am I feeling angry?”
 1. “Is there a valid basis for my anger?”
 2. “What can I do to handle it?”
 3. “What passage of Scripture is being violated?”
- H. Never forget this truth: **You can stop creating your anger any time you choose.**
- I. Remember that your anger won’t change others; neither will it cause them to think better of you.
- J. Rectify any wrongs that may exist between you and brethren. Read Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17.
- K. Remember God commands us not to let anger lead to sin (Ephesians 4:26).
- L. Work on redirecting your anger. Let it lead you to solutions instead of bitterness and resentment.
- M. Be aware of situations that cause you to lose control. It may be wise to avoid these situations in the early stages of your efforts to win over anger.
- N. Be quick to forgive. Even if it requires several times in one day (Luke 17:1-5).
- O. Remember that you can’t control the actions or speech of others, but you can control how you react to them.
- P. Replace your anger with love.
- Q. Do something positive for the other person. **Romans 12:20** – “Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”
- R. Don’t associate with hot-tempered people: **Proverbs 22:24-25** – “Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.”
- S. Use your creative imagination to win over anger:
- T. Pray for help and wisdom from God. James 1:2-5

- U. Stop pinning labels on people. When you think for example that a person is stupid or dumb, his action will usually raise anger in you. Think of everyone as created in God's image.
- V. Thank God for irritations because they are growth opportunities. Each victory makes you stronger in the Lord.
- W. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Try to see his point. Empathy is a great virtue.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Anger is an emotional capacity given to man by God. It plays a positive role in man's daily life. The challenge he is faced with, however, is to keep it under proper control.
- B. God's word guarantees that we can win over anger. Work at it.
- C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation.**