

The Problem of Anger

Ephesians 4:26-27

One of the most persistent and disturbing problems the Christian faces is his anger. It has a way of disarming and frustrating him...of taking away his testimony...of affecting most every area of his life.

In wrestling with anger, our resolutions to improve seem as useless as our attempts to keep it in check. It comes in many forms...from irritation all the way up to rage and uncontrollable temper.... from inner uneasiness to actual displays of violence.

I. First Let's Give a Definition of Anger

1. Webster's dictionary says, "Distress...a hostile feeling of displeasure because of injury, opposition, etc....wild and stormy."
2. So, anger is an emotional reaction of hostility that brings personal displeasure, either to us or to someone else.

II. Various Phases of Anger

Anger is a destructive thing. This emotion does not remain the same. Unchecked, it moves through stages of intensity.

1. Anger begins with mild irritation.
 - a. The irritation may perhaps be innocent.
 - b. It is mild feelings of discomfort brought about by someone or something.
2. Anger turns from irritation to indignation.
 - a. Indignation is the feeling that something must be answered back, that there must be an avenging or a punishment.
 - b. Many times, this feeling goes unexpressed.
 - c. It is there but just a feeling.
3. Anger changes from indignation to wrath.
 - a. Wrath has the idea of expression.
 - b. This stage turns from feeling to expression
4. Anger switches from wrath to fury.
 - a. Fury characterizes itself in violence.
 - b. A loss of emotional control.
5. Anger grows from fury into rage.

Rage is a temporary loss of sanity.

III. Some Observations Regarding Anger. Ephesians 4:26-27

1. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is perhaps one of the most practical of the N.T. Chapter 4 offers us down to earth advice about the problem of anger. Vs. 26-27
2. Anger is a God given emotion.
 - a. Just as God has given us the emotion of compassion, he has given us the emotion of anger
 - b. Our emotions were designed by him.
3. Just as there is something inhuman about one who never shows love, so it is with the person who shows no anger.
The text does say, "Be angry..."
4. Anger is not necessarily sinful.
 - a. The text is qualified, "Be angry, and sin not..."
 - b. There are times when the emotion of anger is appropriate.
5. But if we are angry (having a just cause), we are not to carry that anger to the point of sin.
6. You see, anger must have safeguards.
 - a. The apostle Paul put it this way, "...let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil."
You must have 2 Safeguards.
 - 1) We must not prolong our anger into the night. In Paul's day the closing of the day occurred at sunset. We cannot afford to sleep on wrong feelings. Forgiveness must be in our heart at the day's end.
 - 2) We must not express our anger in such a way that we are weakened, and the devil produces his character through us. Unchecked anger can lead to Satanic involvement.

IV. Examples of Justifiable Anger.

1. When God's word and will are consciously disobeyed by God's people.
Exodus 32:19-20, Moses was justified to be angry at the people.
2. Notice this same principle in God's case in His dealings with Solomon in his rebellion. 2 Kings 11:1-4, 9-10
3. When enemies move into realms outside their rights and jurisdiction.
Notice the words of God in Isaiah 5:20-25.
4. Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul and He was angry because the right of the people of Jabesh-gilead were threatened. 1 Samuel 11:1-6
5. Ahab provoked the Lord to anger by his wicked ways. 1 Kings 16:29-34
6. Anger is justified when children are dealt with unfairly, by parents who know better. Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:213
7. Children have no one to protect them. There are times when we should get angry. What we feel on the child's behalf is right.

V. Illustrations of Unjustifiable Anger.

1. When anger comes from the wrong motive. Luke 15:25-32. Here was the motive of jealousy
2. Nebuchadnezzar's anger was based on the motive of pride. He threw them into a fiery furnace. Daniel 3:12-13
3. Wrong to get angry just because we don't get our way. Jonah 3:10-4:9, Jonah lost the battle with anger. He did not want to see Nineveh repent. But destroyed.
4. When anger comes because we react too quickly...without investigating the facts. The words of both Solomon and James illustrate this point.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 7:8-9
 - b. James 1:19
 - c. Proverbs 14:16-17
 - d. Proverbs 16:32

VI. How to Deal with Anger.

1. Learn to ignore petty disagreements. Proverbs 19:11, 20:3
2. Refrain from close association with anger-prone people. Proverbs 22:24-25
3. Keep close check on your tongue. Proverbs 15:1, 21:23
4. Cultivate honesty in communication without letting anger build up. Proverbs 27:4-6
5. If anger is not controlled...it will destroy you. Proverbs 25:28, 29:20
6. How do you deal with anger in your life? Are you applying God's principles?