

5 Different Types of Anger and What to Do About It

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Scripture (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 7:9, 'Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.'

We also read more Scripture as we progress through today's message.

Introduction

According to my family, I have a quick temper, possibly inherited from my father and grandfather. However, I see myself as a cool, calm, and collected person. Except for when it comes to bad driving, load shedding, lockdown regulations, repetitive WhatsApp conversations, and the misleading of God's people. Apparently, according to Lizette, there might be a 'bit' (read – a lot) more.

In saying this, it's obvious that there are there things that anger me and things that anger us. As we know, anger is usually a destructive force. So why are we angry? Could it be that our anger is out of control or are we struggling to keep it in check?

Added to this are two questions I need to answer for myself, (1) 'is all anger a problem?' and (2) 'what can I do about anger?'

But this is not the end of my questions because when I started looking for answers, I realized that anger can actually be divided up into five groups and if I want to manage my anger, then I couldn't speak to generalized anger anymore. I have to figure out what I am dealing with when I feel angry.

Notes on Natural Anger

It's quite complicated because anger, at the end of the day, anger is a protective emotion. When it comes to natural anger though, anger itself is not the 'problem,' the trigger is the 'problem' because natural anger is one that protects self, loved ones, and values. Natural anger is needed, but at the same time, managing it calls for management of the root: i.e. the need for protection coupled to making some sensible choices about what needs to be protected, and how just much protection is needed.

To this end, spiritual growth stemming from a study of the Word is essential, since we are primarily living in this world while standing in a living relationship with God, under His protective

wing. In Deuteronomy 31:6, under the title 'Joshua Succeeds Moses,' Moses reminds the nation of an important fact that applies to us today, 'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.'

A Quick Temper? Control It

Apparently, this is quite close to home. Doctors tell us that losing our temper can cause high blood pressure and other undesired health effects, even death. Losing 'it' can even cost you, family and friends.

Additionally, a short fuse is capable of causing you to do some things that you will regret, such as saying hurtful and harmful things, breaking things, using foul language, and more. A lost temper means that you are acting out of character and are in a state where good Christian conduct is incredibly difficult.

Will Rogers said, 'Whenever you fly into a rage, you seldom make a safe landing.'

A quick temper is often because of a fragile ego, which in turn results from guilt, shame, anxiety, violations of values, and so forth. Managing a 'quick temper anger' does nothing for the guilt, shame, anxiety, etc. because it relies on a conscious decision to manage a subconscious emotion. And being a quick temper, things often happen far quicker (almost automatically) than a person's ability to manage the trigger.

Instead, we control a quick temper because, in Christ, we can do so. Proverbs 15:18 reads, 'A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.' Proverbs 14:17 reminds us that 'A quick-tempered person does foolish things...' So instead:

- Stop blaming and accept responsibility for your short fuse.
- Recognize that both your temper as well as the triggers need to be controlled.
- Confess your wrongdoings to God and ask for His help.
- Take action: (1) pause, think deeply, and then react and (2) seek professional help to identify and manage all triggers, if need be.

One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control...

Sinful anger? Condemn it

Sinful anger causes you to sin. It is illegitimate anger that causes pain and barriers. Let's work with the first part of Matthew 5:22, 'But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.'

Jesus' anger was always appropriately focussed on what was being done by people (e.g. Matthew 21:12-13 and Mark 3:5). In this light, the unrepentant have a problem because they stand before the righteous anger of God.

Christ's anger was typically because of the ungodly attitudes and actions by those (people) around Him. Our anger should reflect the attitude of Christ when we are confronted by things that people do. Jesus' anger did not result in long term grudges. Christ did not 'get even' and neither should we (Romans 12:19). He forgave.

Jesus went to the cross to separate the repentant sinner from his/her sins (Psalm 103:12): God became man and forgave us! If you are still focussing your anger on the person then perhaps, your anger is sinful. Personally, I struggle to grasp the simultaneous coexistence of anger and forgiveness toward a person. I don't think it's possible. If I am right, you will have to choose between the two.

In reality, you probably cannot change what the person is doing; however, the Holy Spirit can. But there is a lot that you can do for the person, including forgiving, modelling the Christian life, and praying for him/her.

Some checkpoints:

- Is your anger legitimately motivated?
- Are your actions appropriate when you are angry?
- Are you intentionally harbouring anger?
- Are you choosing the path of forgiveness?

Stubborn anger? Deal With it ASAP

We are familiar with Ephesians 4:26, "'In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.' In other words, do not let anger linger! But have you read on? The rest of Ephesian 24 is profound.

Verse 31, for example, describes the consequences of holding onto anger (and other sins); Paul writes, 'Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.' In this sense, the bitterness is all the times you have been angry and disappointed because you have been treated unfairly. Bitterness is painful.

After the initial anger comes bitterness, after bitterness comes rage, which is bitterness that has reached an angry boiling point. Rage is furious anger expressed.

Then comes brawling (fighting) and slander (words you will come to regret). Finally, malice enters. Malice is the desire to harm somebody. You want to cause someone pain. And here is the thing, malice is a planned activity. Granted the speed at which the planning is done is variable, but malice is nonetheless a clear intention.

Instead of allowing anger to become stubborn practice the advice of verses 31 & 32:

- Get rid of all bitterness.
- Be kind.
- Be compassionate.
- Forgive, just as God has forgiven you (unconditionally).

Righteous Anger? Channel it

Mark 3:1-5 is a great example of sanctified anger. It reads, 'Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.'

Jesus did what is right after being angered by stubborn and legalistic hearts.

When we look at the world around us, we see so much that is wrong: rape, murder, corruption, drug & alcohol abuse, and more. So if this angers you, what are you going to do about it? How about allowing holy anger to guide you toward Christian action?

- First, seek God's kingdom, for there you will find the King of kings; the ruler over the entire universe.
- Follow His commandments of John 13:34, 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.'
- Be willing to evangelize. A broken world needs Christ.
- Practice *koinonia*. It simply means fellowship or sharing and is a key concept in communion. As Christians, our connectedness is *koinonia*.
- Pray about all things that trouble you and for all leadership.
- Get ready for His return.

Conclusion

Clearly, there are different types of anger when we come to think of it. None of them is above you in the sense that matters are inevitable. God, not you, is the strength, wisdom, power, and every resource you need to control your anger.

So if you must, be angry, but don't sin. Understand your anger and appropriately deal with it. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Don't allow the devil to have a foothold in your life. But channel that anger so it can begin to accomplish victories for Jesus.

Let's remind ourselves that the fruit of the Spirit is 'love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5:22-23).

Amen.