

Anger

by Beverly Littau

Everyone experiences angry feelings at one time or another. It is a normal part of the human experience. Anger is an often misunderstood emotion, and it is the purpose of this pamphlet to answer some basic questions about anger:

- What is anger?
- Is anger a sin?
- What are the four sources of anger?
- What can I learn from my anger?
- How should I deal with anger?

What is Anger?

Anger is simply an emotion. It is like an alarm that warns of danger or the red light on the dashboard that warns you of something that needs attention.

Anger is often triggered when our expectations are not met. Anger can be a slow burn, a simmering pot, or a raging fire. We may feel it in varying degrees at various times, or it may always feel the same. Individuals experience it differently.

Is Anger a Sin?

Anger is not a sin. The Bible tells us “be angry and sin not,” (Ephesians 4:26) but this is not permission to let anger sit in us. It goes on to say, “let not the sun go down on your anger.”

Why? Probably because bitterness is much more difficult to rid ourselves of. It is sinful to hold onto anger and let it turn to bitterness. The writer of Hebrews tells us to “see to it that no root of bitterness springs up.” (Hebrews 12:15)

While anger is not a sin, we must keep in mind that our expressions of anger can be sinful responses to the feelings.

• What Are the Four Sources of Anger?

There are four basic reasons why people become angry:

Hurt – We feel unloved or uncared for by someone, or we feel betrayed, rejected, or abandoned. We feel angry, but under the angry feeling is hurt.

Injustice – We feel that a person’s actions, behaviors, words, or attitudes are “just not fair.” We feel anger and possibly a desire to fight back.

Fear – We often feel anger when we are faced with something that we fear—financial ruin, physical illness, loss, etc.

Frustration – When things aren’t going according to our plan or our expectations or when something isn’t working right, we may begin to feel angry.

Anger is a “cover-up.” It is what we call a “secondary emotion.” Often we may allow ourselves

to feel angry in a subconscious effort to not have to feel hurt, injustice, fear or frustration.

What Can I Learn from My Anger?

- It can give insight into your past.
- Anger can lead you to discover the feelings UNDER the anger in order to resolve them.
- It can help you learn more about how you think about yourself, others, and your life.
- Anger can help you to identify unhealthy boundaries in your life.
- It can help you to identify your unmet needs and your unhealthy ways of getting those needs met.

How Should I Deal with Anger?

For some people, anger is a *pattern of behavior* that must be broken. If that is the case, it usually will require the help of a qualified counselor or even a close friend who can help you to talk through issues in your life that are keeping you stuck in your anger.

Generally, the way to break out of anger is to change the way we think—about ourselves, others, and our situation.

Here are some things you can try, and over time you may see good results:

- Identify the underlying feeling (hurt, injustice, fear, and frustration) and then try to resolve *that* feeling. The angry feeling will go when the underlying feeling does!
- Remember that you have no control over the other person. So use the anger to learn about yourself.
- Ask yourself if this feeling or situation is familiar, and if it is, work on resolving the past issue that triggers the anger.
- Ask yourself how important the issue is to you. If it isn't a major issue, it may be worth just "letting it go."
- Think about how your anger is hurting YOU. Yes, it hurts those around you also, but ultimately your body and your soul pay the price.

God is your Helper in dealing with your anger. (These are Steps 1 and 2 of any "12 Step-Program.") Pray and turn to scripture where there is a wealth of insight about anger and overcoming it.

Bible Verses to Consider

James 1:19-21 "My dearly loved brothers, understand this: everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness."

Proverbs 15:18 "A hot-tempered man stirs up conflict, but a man slow to anger calms strife."

Proverbs 29:11 "An unwise man gives full vent to his anger, but a prudent man holds it in check."

Ecclesiastes 7:9 "Don't let your spirit rush to be angry, for anger is allowed to stay in the heart of the foolish."

Joel 2:13 "For the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love."

Ephesians 4:31-5:1 “Get rid of all bitterness , rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as dearly beloved children.”

Romans 12:2 “...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”