

Victim or Victoriously Anger Free (Part I)

By Diana Morgan, Ph.D.

We live in a world where there is a preponderance of people with both overt and/or covert anger. Society normalizes road rage, is entertained by TV shows where audiences encourage fighting people over affairs and paternity concerns, engages in legalized sports one person wins by hurting their opponent, is entertained by movies where people get shot, stabbed, maimed, molested, raped, or murdered and video games that purport 'acceptable' levels of anger, even calling some measures of anger 'healthy.' In addition, library and bookstore shelves are replete with the latest anger management curricula. Interesting. It seems normative that people possess, manage and maintain a repository of anger.

In my clinical practice, I tell clients that I am not in the business of helping them maintain and store anger even though it is possible. Further, it is questionable, whether or not one can have anger for extended periods of time without adversely impacting their relationships with others or their own well-being. I liken managing anger to a pilot light on a traditional gas stove. In order to stay lit, it requires a continual fuel source. Eventually, the next person who engages the knob or spills something on the burner...kaboom! Depending

on the fuel source, you may have a hot mess! I think it best to extinguish the flame.

What is anger?

Anger is defined as a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong, wrath or ire. It can be a natural emotion or response for many people such as a response to being hurt, wounded, rejected, disappointed, criticized, abandoned, ridiculed or threatened (dictionary.com). If unchecked or untreated, anger can lead to problems in one's life or relationships. It is considered a secondary emotion that masks a primary emotion such as fear. It can be fueled by situations such as unmet needs or expectations, hurts, disappointments, pride, feelings of injustice, being unloved, and unforgiveness. Even though it may be a natural response to an unwanted stimuli, how healthy is it?

Where does it reside?

Turned inward, anger can lead to problems such as depression, anxiety, resentment or bitterness — mental and/or behavioral health concerns. Under checked anger can lead to a host of physical symptoms such as stress, heart palpitations, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Anger



externalized can lead to aggression or violence, which can result in verbal attacks or physical abuse. It never has a neutral effect. Left unchecked, it often searches silently for a victim.

It is possible for people to carry anger and be unaware they are doing so. Coupled with unforgiveness, it is just a matter of time before others can see the folly of their ways.

Do I have to let it go?

It is not uncommon to hear people quote the following scripture found in Ephesians 4:26 as evidence to justify their anger:

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath. When angry, do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down. Further, verse 27 adds: Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil [give no opportunity to him]. (AMP)

These passages seem to justify being angry for a just cause as long as one does not sin. But people might forget that they are supposed to get rid of their anger quickly lest the devil activate the next level of his master-minded scheme to steal, kill or destroy!

Another scripture often quoted is Matthew 21:12:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.

It certainly sounds like Jesus not only got angry but externalized His displeasure at the behavior of the temple occupants by taking action. Unfortunately, people sometimes make a doctrine out of Jesus' anger, use it to justify why they are allowed to be angry, stay angry, and react/respond poorly while angry. Yet, Romans 12:18 says: *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Is my anger ever justified?

Many things that people get angry about do not warrant the investment of emotional energy they expend. In various relationships, challenges surface because of personality or character differences or simply that they have a different worldview than others may hold. As an example, married couples may quarrel about whether or not family members consistently clean the kitchen at the end of the meal, but in reality, whether the dishes retire sparkling clean to their assigned position in the kitchen cabinet that evening or the next morning should not make or break a relationship. While the issue may result in some minor annoyances, it is a matter of division of labor, for which the skill of compromise should be applied. There is more than one legitimate way to do most things!

Anger should be reserved for injustices or sin, and even then, the Word of God says that we should not sin. Further, Ephesians 4:29 states: *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19b).*

Return anger with fresh fruit

And, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23a). The fruit born of the Spirit of God is indicative of the character of the believer. John 15:35 says: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* Thus, we can see from the Word of God that believers are to operate by the grace of God exhibiting the fruit of His spirit at all times.

Meditations from the Word of God

1. Philippians 3:13-14

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. When we are angry,

we do not reach high enough. We often spend a considerable amount of time trying to figure out how to stop or get even with the offender.

2. Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Here the Word of God tells us what to think about. Not only do these things not result in anger and but they can dispel existing anger as well.

3. Proverbs 22:24 (AMP)

Make no friendships with a man given to anger, and with a wrathful man do not associate. So the Bible even warns us to disassociate with angry people.

4. Psalm 37:8-9

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. We can and should make a choice to not be angry anymore.

5. James 1:19

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. It certainly is better to not get angry in the first place.

6. Luke 18:1

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. We should pray without ceasing and offer up thanksgiving to the Lord at all times.

7. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We are armed and dangerous, but not with natural weapons. Get rid of negative thoughts. Take them captive and cast them down. Then, replace them with truth from the Word of God.

8. I Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

Then pray some more.

All scripture originates from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.



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