

ANGER

Within the family circle, one of the most important topics a pastor has to deal with concerns anger; and the question always asked, “Is it a sin for a Christian to get angry?” The answer to that is, “Yes and No!” There is anger of which the Bible approves and there is anger that is sin. However, all anger will cause a reaction in others, and therefore, it needs to be handled correctly. Mark Twain said, “Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”

There isn't a person alive who hasn't experienced anger. Christian counsellors report that 50 percent of people who come in for counselling have problems dealing with anger. Anger can tear apart relationships. Sadly, most people tend to justify their anger instead of accepting responsibility for it. There is a type of anger that the Bible approves of called “righteous indignation,” and this anger never involves self-protection, but rather, is a defence of others or a principle (Galatians 2:11-14; John 2:13-18). Aristotle said, “Anybody can become angry — that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way — that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.”

Getting angry because someone has offended you is not righteous indignation, it is merely selfish outrage (an adult tantrum). Note, anger turns to sin when it is selfishly motivated, or when anger is allowed to linger (Ephesians 4:26-27). Instead of using the energy generated by anger to attack the problem you are facing, it's the other person who is attacked. Anger becomes sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint, and when you refuse to be pacified.

We can all handle anger correctly by communicating to solve the problem. There are three basic rules of communication shared in Ephesians 4:15; 25-32:

- 1) **Be honest.** Others cannot read your mind; therefore, you must be transparent and speak the truth in love (especially concerning your own feelings).
- 2) **Deal with matters quickly.** You must not allow what is bothering you to fester until you lose control. Dealing with and sharing what is bothering you before it gets to that point is important.
- 3) **Act, and not react.** Attack the problem and not the person! Take ‘time out’ to reflect upon the godly way to respond and to remind yourself how anger is to be used to solve problems and not create bigger ones.

Finally, you cannot control how others act or respond, but you can make the changes that need to be made on your part. Through prayer and reliance upon God's Holy Spirit, ungodly anger can be overcome. The Bible says, “*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,*” says the Lord (Zachariah 4:6). Just as you may have allowed anger to become entrenched in your life by habitual practice, you must also practice responding calmly until it becomes a habit itself. Don't give in to your anger, exercise self-control, and be the person God created you to be!