

REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY

Repenting from displays of sinful anger is necessary in overcoming this growth-stunting behavior. Put yourself in the place of the one to whom you express your anger. Would you want to be the brunt of such hostility? Confess your sin to God and the one who gets the fallout of your anger, with the commitment to allow the Spirit to work self-control in you in a way that will enable you to deal with your anger.

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

DIGGING DEEPER

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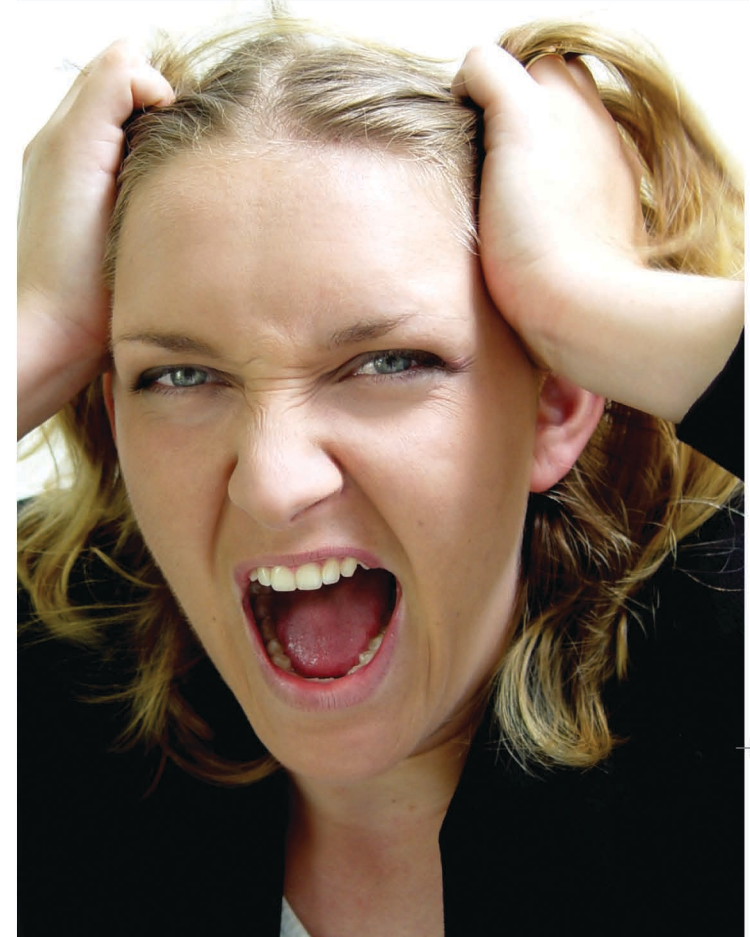
601 Route 530 • Whiting, NJ 08759-3599
800.453.7942 • 732.350.1187
fax 732.849.1392

colony@americaskeswick.org
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ANGER



Anger

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

by **MICHAEL P. WOODS, M.Div.**
Pastor, Colony of Mercy Staff 1996-2008



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Anger: A Biblical View

Everyone gets angry at one time or another. Something happens in our life that doesn't quite go the way we expect. We may have been wronged by a spouse, friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc. How we respond to these wrongdoings will either bring glory or dishonor to God. Here are some verses to keep in mind as we consider this topic of anger:

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God." – JAMES 1:19-20

"Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." – EPHESIANS 4:26-27

There is nowhere in the Bible that says anger is a sin. The emotion of anger is not inherently sinful. It is an emotional response to injustice or wrongdoing. However, the expression of anger can be sinful.

IS ANGER REALLY GOD-GIVEN?

Frequently, throughout the Old Testament, we see situations where God's anger is kindled toward either a person or a group of people who have acted wickedly before Him. God's wrath was poured out upon Sodom and Gomorrah for their abominable acts against Him. Different kings of Israel, when they acted wickedly, were dealt with according to God's anger. God's display of His anger is directed toward the sinfulness of mankind. This is exemplified by the outpouring of His wrath upon His one and only Son to pay the penalty for our sin. You see, God's anger is in response to the wrongdoing and injustices that take place among mankind as a result of living in a fallen world as fallen creatures. The real-

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ity that we even possess anger is evidence that we are created in God's image with a concern for justice and righteousness. It is an internal barometer of discerning between right and wrong.

DISTORTED, SINFUL ANGER

Often anger is a result of distorted thoughts or beliefs. The account of Naaman in II Kings 5 is an example of distorted thoughts that led to his anger. The prescribed remedy for his leprosy was not what he expected! It was not until after his servant talked him into dipping himself into the Jordan that his anger subsided and he was able to receive the remedy for his leprosy.

Sometimes, anger rises within when a perceived personal "right" has been violated. The truth is, the only right we have is to be called "sons of God" (John 1:12). Psalm 24 tells us that the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. This includes what we believe to be our rights.

THINKING THROUGH ANGER

Proverbs 14:29 tells us that *"He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly"*. Being slow to anger is the first step in thinking through anger. Asking yourself, "Why am I angry?"... "What are my expectations?"... "What 'right' do I think is being violated?" will prolong a "knee-jerk" reaction to a situation that triggers emotions of anger.

Understanding the sovereignty of God in the midst of your circumstances also helps in thinking through your anger. After all, God could have prevented the situations that trigger your anger. But He will use

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them to move you to depend on Him and resolve the issue that causes your anger to flare.

HANDLING ANGER BIBLICALLY

1) Give yourself to God's control. Seek God's help in handling the situation. The Apostle Paul told the Philippians that he *"could do all things through Christ ..."* This also pertains to our handling anger biblically. There is a right way to express anger. Ask God to show you how to express it in a way that is pleasing and honoring to Him.

2) Rejoice in what God is doing through this situation. James 1:2 tells us to *"count it all joy when faced by various trials."* God strengthens our faith in Him when trials come our way. Also, the Apostle Paul tells us to *"rejoice in the Lord always"* (Philippians 4:4). As you rejoice in God's working in your life, you can see your situations and circumstances from an eternal perspective and be able to express your anger in a more constructive way.

3) Focus on the problem, not the person. When your focus is directed toward the person through whom an angry situation may come, you're not working to resolve the problem. "You make me mad" is an improper response to a situation that triggers your anger. "I get angry when..." is a more accurate response since the focal point is on the problem, not the person.

4) Use the situation as an opportunity for self-examination. Evaluate what part you play in the circumstance that causes your anger. Have you been lazy, irresponsible, stubborn, critical, wasteful, ungrateful, bossy, haughty, overly demanding, a nag, inconsiderate, unwilling to change? "Often we sow the wind and reap the whirlwind." With what measure we dish it out, we receive it back. Our problems are often the mirror of our own faults. According to the Bible, we roll a stone and it rolls back on us; we dig a pit and then fall into it ourselves; we are taken captive by our own iniquities.