

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

Forgiveness: Part I

Positive Benefit of Anger

Key Words: Feel, Offense, Offender, Forgive

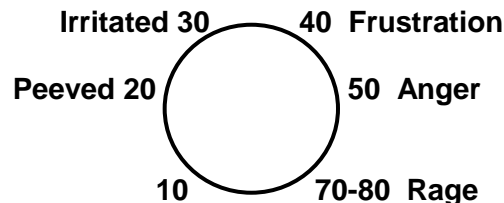
I. View one aspect of anger as a benefit.

A. One of the common reasons anger is not viewed in any positive light is that there is so little written, spoken or taught about anger from a positive perspective.

1. Dr. Gary Oliver, Ph.D., the Executive Director of the Center for Marriage and Family Studies at John Brown University, states: "In Christian circles, not enough has been written on the positive side of anger" (Raising Kids to Love Jesus, p. 283).
2. Dr. Oliver estimates that at least 50% of the Christians he has polled view anger from an almost exclusively negative perspective (IBID, p. 278).
3. Dr. Paul Meyer estimates that the cost of improper handling of anger could cause up to 95% of psychological depression (Good and Angry, p.5) therefore it is avoided at all cost.

B. Anger could be the most lied about emotion, especially in Christian circles.

1. Anger can be experienced at various speeds or intensities inside you.
2. One could say, "I'm not angry, I'm just frustrated." But frustration is anger at 40 miles (kilometers) an hour.



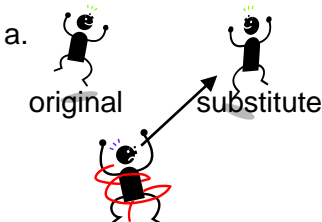
Ask the group what they were taught about anger. How was anger taught to them and by whom? What influence did that teaching have on their emotional life?

C. There are at least four biblical reasons Christians avoid acknowledging the presence of their anger. (And they are good reasons.)

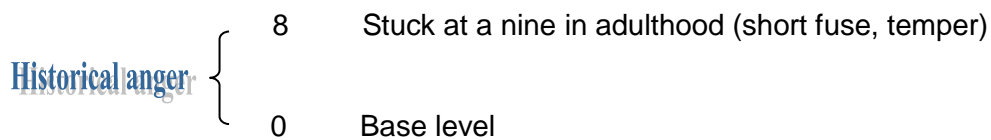
1. Anger is selfish and is labeled as one of the fruit of the flesh (selfishness).
 - a. Gal. 5:20-21a, “idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these...”
2. Anger is encouraged to be removed from you in scripture at all costs – Don’t Stuff It!
 - a. Eph. 4:31, “Let all bitterness and wrath (rage) and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice.”
3. Anger does not produce good results in relationships. It is one of the most damaging emotions to relationships. // and is the top destroyer in marriage and relationships with children.
 - a. James 1:20, “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”
 - b. Col. 3:19, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.”
 - c. Col. 3:21, “Fathers, do not provoke your children (to anger), lest they become discouraged.” (CF Eph 6:4) ((through over control, favoritism, criticism, perfectionism)).
4. Angry people are to be avoided.
 - a. Prov. 22:24, “Do not associate with (marry) a man controlled by anger or don’t go with a person who has a temper.”
 - b. Angry preaching does not work either.

D. Anger is never buried dead emotionally inside you even if it is stuffed or repressed. (Neither is fear, guilt, shame)

1. Emotions never die because they are recorded chemically and electronically in the brain just like events are recorded.

2. Anger goes deep down inside and stays buried and then it seeps out in life in various ways mentally, emotionally and/or physically.
 - a. Hebrews 12:15 "See to it that no one comes short of (or lacks) the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."
3. You see, 95% of all cases of depression are caused by repressed (stuffed or accumulated) anger toward others or oneself (Dr. Meyer p. 168).
 - a. Clinical depression symptoms: insomnia, decreased energy, irritability, poor concentration, headaches, decrease in appetite, thoughts of suicide.
 - b. Antidepressant medication will give temporary relief to the clinically depressed person by rebuilding (replenishing) the brain's serotonin level. But until the root cause of the person's depression is dealt with (biblically), the depression returns within days. In most cases, the root cause of the depression is repressed anger and until the person truly forgives the person(s) who has/have caused the anger, the brain will continue to be depressed, possibly for life (Dr. Meyer p. 170).
4. Unprocessed anger can get transferred (displaced) from the original object of the anger to a more acceptable and safer substitute (others or self).
 - a.
 
5. Even a majority of anxiety disorders involve fear of becoming aware of unconscious, repressed (stuffed) anger toward others or ourselves (Dr. Meyer, p.168).
6. A majority of the mental health problems we face in life can be avoided by becoming skilled in the use of the tool of forgiveness (Dr. Meyer, p. 168).
7. Anger, therefore, can be collected over the years. As it is collected, it raises your normal anger level. When you were born, your daily anger level was "0." But as you accumulate anger, your anger level can rise from "0" to any level 1-10. If you are stuck at an anger level of 8, all you need in an offense (or hurt) of a 2 and you add 8 to that and your reaction is a 10. Often anger expressed at a high 10 level is not an "over reaction", it is an accumulated reaction.

10 High



8. You can still function in life with a wounded, angry heart but it is much more difficult. It is like living life with handcuffs on or a drain on your emotional battery.

E. Built up anger allows Satan to take over the management of our lives, relationships and choices (quick temper).

1. Eph. 4:27, "Nor give place (control of your life) to the devil."
2. Where do you see someone opened up to Satan and then used by him? John 13:2 ... "and supper being ended, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas... to betray Him..."

In what ways has your anger damaged any of your relationships? How did you correct it? How did others respond to your change? How have you experienced others correcting their anger? How did they do it?

F. Anger can be a major source of shame. // Why? "Why did I do that?"

1. Because when we are angry we do a lot of hurtful things then later we realize we were foolish, stupid, even dumb to have done them. Then the shame pours in. Usually when we are angry we do the next dumb thing and regret it later.
 - a. Prov 14:17, "A quick tempered man acts foolishly..."
2. God told Moses to speak to the rock and water would come forth to supply Israel's needs. Instead, Moses, in anger, struck the rock and water came out but as a result God did not allow him to enter the promised land of Canaan.
 - a. Numbers 20:11-12, "Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. ¹² Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

G. Anger can be expressed in various ways:

1. The exploder // ("thumos," outbursts of rage, temper)

2. Imploders // It is expressed in subtle ways towards those who hurt them. They can turn it in on themselves resulting in depression. Rage can be turned against oneself and it can result in suicide. It can come out in passive anger.
3. Runners // (Hide in drugs, alcohol, business, work, computers, T.V., etc.)

How did you see these three expressions of anger demonstrated in your home? How did it affect your family?

H. (True) Anger can be used in many wrong ways.

1. To change // someone (i.e., discipline)
2. To control // (spouse, kids, people, employees, egg walkers)
3. To manipulate
 - a. You'll have to please the angry person or they will get mad.
 - b. Manipulators are the ones who cause others to walk on eggs (hyper-sensitive) to prevent the angry one from acting out in their anger.
 - c. Those who walk on eggs take responsibility to control the anger of the angry person.
4. To avoid feeling other negative emotions // like fear and guilt.
 - a. If one is made to feel guilt he will get angry to hide or avoid feeling the guilt.
 - b. Anger is usually hiding another emotion like fear.
5. To avoid responsibility
 - a. If one fails to perform a responsibility and is held responsible for that failure he could get mad to get you back down and reduce the accountability.
6. To get revenge on someone whom you feel needs to pay for the pain they caused you.
7. To get their own selfish way // especially if their way is blocked.

In what ways have you used anger in a wrong way? How do you believe you learned it? How was unhealthy anger used on you? How did you feel? What have you done with it since?

II. Understand God's perspective on anger. // Why? When someone admits they're angry, respond with an open, receptive, accepting facial expression. This encourages them to be honest about their anger so it can be processed biblically. There are at least four reasons to welcome the acknowledgment of the presence of anger.

A. God knows you are going to get hurt in life and in relationships. // It is only a matter of when, how and who? It is normal.

1. It's a fact of life that every person will get hurt emotionally and sometimes physically.
 - a. The Apostle Peter warned us, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning (regarding) the fiery (painful) trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you." (1 Pet 4:12)
 - 1) Expect the trial! Start the process of healing.
 - 2) "Strange", amazed, shocked. "Why me, God?"
 - a) This shock reflects the wrong theology that as believers they are exempt or excused from the hurts, trials and loss of life.
 - b. Some believe trials are a result of sin.
 - 1) That is "toxic faith." Bad doctrine.
 - c. The apostle Paul clearly stated that all who would live godly lives will experience hurts.
 - 1) 2 Timothy 3:12 "and indeed all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."
2. You are not excused from the natural law of cause and effect (Christian spouses die of cancer; babies die; believers have accidents).
 - a. 1 Cor. 10:13 "No temptation (or trial) has overtaken (seized from behind) you (believers) such as is common to man (mankind) . . ."
3. (In fact) Christians are singled out to experience hurt. // That is one good reason to learn to respond to it biblically.

- a. I Peter 2:20-21 “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right, and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.”
- b. “Called” (“*ek*” - out of, “*kaleo*” - to call)
 - 1) ill. In the military, an officer will call out certain men who are lined up before him for some special assignment. They are called-out ones.
- c. It is a myth to believe that the safest place in the world is to be in the center of God’s will. Unfortunately that is not true. Ask the apostle Paul how safe it is to be in the center of God’s will (2 Cor. 6:2-5; 11:24-27).
 - 1) Five times beaten with rods
 - 2) Stoned once
 - 3) Three times shipwrecked (night/day in the ocean)
 - 4) Perils (in danger of) of robbers, his countrymen, Gentiles, city, desert, false brethren, weariness, toil, hunger, thirst, cold, naked, often in fasting, imprisonments, etc.
 - 5) Were these painful events an indication that Paul was out of God’s will?

Why do you think so many believers are bitter because they experienced terrific hurts or tragedies? What does that reflect in their thinking? (Bad things are not to happen to good or God’s people.) Where do you think they were taught that? Why do you think some teachers and preachers have failed to tell them the truth about suffering?

B. God knows that anger can be an automatic emotional response to present and past hurts whether you are a Christian or not. // It is not usually a choice to get angry but it is a choice with what you do with the anger.

- 1. What advantage does a believer have over a non-believer in dealing with the painful hurts of life that can result in anger?
 - a. God gives him the tools to use to process it (II Peter 1:3).
 - b. God gives him the power to use the tools (Phil. 2:13).

- c. God gives him the training to use the tools (James 1:2, 3).
 - d. God gives him the support while using the tools (Gal. 6:2).
 - e. God gives him rewards for using the tools (II Cor. 5:10).
2. But just as anger is automatic, our mature response to it must be automatic by using our biblical tools to deal with it.
 3. Because anger is so wide spread even in Christian people, how to deal with it should be taught often in the church.

C. God designed anger to be a notifier of needs, hurts, fears, frustrations like pain reveals physical needs.

1. The red light on the dashboard of a car indicates to the driver a need the car has. If one ignores this warning light, the car could experience serious damage.
2. The Psalmist used his emotion of depressed feelings to discover his need. He prayed, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted (upset, depressed) within me?" (Ps. 42:5a).
 - a. "Cast down" lit. "bent down" as in depression.
 - b. The Psalmist felt the emotion first, then, asked himself a question to determine what the need was behind the emotion.
 - c. He used that emotion like a window to see through to determine his need.
 - d. The goal of pointing out the source of the hurt or negative emotion is so it can be healed and the person set free. In the Psalmist's case, he discovered he had lost hope in God.
 - 1) Ps. 42:5
3. Dr. Les Carter would say, "Anger is an emotion that speaks up for personal needs." (Good and Angry, p. 28)

D. (Therefore) God gives you permission to acknowledge (feel) your healthy anger without shame. Eph. 4:26 // "Be angry and do not sin."

1. You should be able to give a person permission to acknowledge his anger and express it appropriately.
2. God did not say, "Do not sin by being angry."

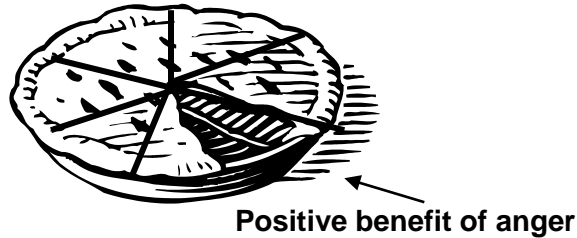
- a. Many people were never allowed to be angry even in a healthy sense; therefore, they were never able to heal a hurt.
 - b. They may have been sent to their room as a child or somewhere to change their attitude.
 - 1) Stop crying – big boys (girls) don't cry then later in life have to reconnect with their emotions in adulthood.
 - 2) Denying or forced to stuff your emotions is a form of emotional abuse.
 - c. Or, they may have been told they should not feel that way.
3. There are two Greek words used for anger in the New Testament.
- a. Orge – inside agitation that tends to be more abiding, stirring, churning, often with a possible goal of revenge.
 - 1) This is the word for “anger” in Eph. 4:26.
 - 2) Prov. 14:29:a, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding.”
 - b. Thumos – quick bursts of rage, temper, that erupts like a volcano then quickly reduces. It is more sudden in its rise than “orge”.
 - 1) This word is found 18 times in the New Testament.
 - a) 10 are in Revelation.
 - b) 7 of the 10 refer to God's rage in Revelation.
 - c) Once in Romans 2:8.
 - d) The remaining seven uses of “*thumos*” are never used in a good sense in the New Testament.
 - 2) God never gave us permission to go into a volcanic rage and erupt all over people inflicting great pain and destruction.
4. God gives you full permission to acknowledge present anger (*orge*) without feeling guilty about it or second guessing yourself. But, with that permission it is your responsibility to deal with it in a biblical fashion. God never gave permission to explode in anger and be hurtful either physically or emotionally to anyone.
- a. Of the 455 times the word “anger” is used in the Old Testament, 375 times it refers to God's anger, leaving only 80 times referring to man.

III. Discover the legitimate need behind your friend, anger. // How?

A. Discover the positive benefit of anger.

1. If a pie is divided into seven equal parts, six of those parts are wrong expressions of anger. But the one part (slice) of the pie represents a positive benefit of anger.

Drawing:



2. The positive part is that it reveals a hurt that needs to be worked through by the use of the biblical tool of forgiveness.

B. Give yourself permission to feel it. // It is stored in your core belief system called the heart.

1. Josh's story
 - a. I've known Josh for years. He was raised in a single parent home by his mother who never married. He attended a private Christian school, excelling in speech and drama, was handsome and talented but had one small problem. This small problem frequently robbed Josh and his mother of any peace in their home. Why? Josh was a rager!
 - b. When Josh acknowledged his anger the counselor said, "Great, feel the rage and tell me where it is coming from."
2. When Josh could feel his anger, he was able to identify and list the offenses, which was preparation for the steps of forgiveness.
3. For Josh, God revealed through prayer the object of his anger was his mother. God may reveal more than one person who is the source of your anger.
4. His immediate reaction was, "I'm not going to blame my mom for my own behavior."
5. Josh had to distinguish in his mind between "excusing" his wrong behavior and "explaining" the source of the hurt that caused the anger that needed to be forgiven.

- a. Excusing wrong behavior is sin. But understanding where the wrong behavior is coming from in order to process it biblically, that is good.
- 6. The word guilt means “worthy of blame.” Josh’s mom was responsible for her behavior that impacted Josh. Josh was responsible to process the hurts his mother caused by using the tool of forgiveness.
- 7. Failure to assign legitimate responsibility for the wrongs that were inflicted will automatically prevent the use of the forgiveness tool and prevent healing.
 - a. If you do not acknowledge the anger, you will not acknowledge the offense.
 - b. If you fail to acknowledge the offense, you will not clearly identify the offender.
 - c. If you do not identify the offender, you will not forgive and be free.
 - 1) That is why anger can be beneficial if it leads to the offense and ultimately leads to forgiveness.
 - d. If you do not forgive, you remain in the bondage of bitterness and of torment.

C. Follow the anger down to the offense (need) to be processed.

- 1. Note the list of hurts (wounds) Josh was able to identify because he was allowed to feel the anger.
 - a. Mom forced me to grow up too fast.
 - b. She made me emotionally dependent on her.
 - c. She made me responsible for her emotional well being.
 - d. She told me what to believe and did not allow me to question her.
 - e. She never allowed me to have an opinion different from hers.
 - f. She made me her husband replacement.
 - g. She restricted me from having friends my own age while insisting on being my best friend.
 - h. She never allowed me to have choices.
 - i. She insisted on tagging along wherever I went with my friends.
 - j. She was very controlling because of her fear.
 - k. She was jealous of any potential girlfriend.

- l. She lived a hypocritical lifestyle that did not reflect her religious convictions.
 - m. She distorted my view of God, a wife and a mother.
 - n. She insisted on perfection.
 - o. Her acceptance was based on performance.
 - p. She treats me as a 12 year old when I am 21.
 - q. She made me responsible to rescue her from her bad decisions.
 - r. She didn't allow me to express normal emotions like anger.
2. Aristotle once said, "An archer is more apt to hit the target if he can see it." You, too, are more likely to forgive a person if you clearly identify an offense that needs to be forgiven.

IV. Keys for Success

- A. Acknowledge the positive side of anger.**
- B. Avoid the wrong uses of anger.**
- C. Welcome anger as a means of identifying an offense.**
- D. View emotions as notifiers of needs.**
- E. Discover the need behind the anger.**
- F. Choose to meet that need in a healthy way.**
- G. Identify offenses.**

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