

Taming Your Temper

Most murders involve people who know each other.

Thousands of husbands brutally attack their wives.

Thousands of children are beaten by their parents.

All of the above involve people who have not learnt to control their tempers. Uncontrolled anger leads to brutality and even murder.

In this study we are going to examine God's formula for controlling our anger and by doing so strengthen our relationships with others.

1 Corinthians 13:5 [NIV] *"Love is not easily angered."*

Scripture does **not** say the love does not get angry, for sometimes love does get angry.

Sometimes the loving thing to do is to get angry.

The people we are most likely to get angry with are those we love the most. Those who are closest to us whom we love the most are the ones who can fulfil our emotional needs.

When they, our loved ones, don't fulfil our emotional needs then we get angry.

The Bible gives us keys to managing our anger.

The six "R"s that reduce anger.

a) Resolve to manage our anger.

Proverbs 16:32 [Living Bible] *"It is better to be slow tempered than famous, it is better to have self-control than to control an army."*

God gave to all of us in our biological makeup the capacity to become angry.

Anger is not necessary sin! God gets angry. It is how we manage this natural ability to get angry that decides if what we are doing is sinful or not.

Anger managed correctly becomes an asset rather than a liability.

We will not be able to avoid anger in our lives but we must learn how to control anger.

How?

Stop justifying our uncontrolled anger.

Stop making excuses for uncontrolled anger.

We can control our anger!

Haven't we all been in an angry verbal battle with someone and the telephone rings?

Remember how quickly we managed our anger as we answered the telephone?

We are shouting at the other person, we pick up the phone and in a very controlled quiet voice we say “Hello, who is that?” !!

We have got a far greater control over our anger than we think we have.

Admit we can control our anger if we desire, to with God’s help.

b) Realise the cost of uncontrolled anger.

Realising the tremendous damage that uncontrolled anger can do to relationships is a great motivation to managing our anger.

The Bible tells us that there is always a heavy price we have to pay for uncontrolled anger.

Proverbs 29:22 [Living Bible] *“A hot-tempered man starts fights and gets into all kinds of trouble.”*

We have all experienced the trouble we cause when we don’t control our anger.

Proverbs 15:18 [Good News Bible] *“Hot tempers cause arguments but patience brings peace.”*

Not controlling our anger will always turn a discussion into an argument and destroy any peaceful relationship.

Proverbs 14:29 [Living Bible] *“A wise man controls his temper, he knows that anger causes mistakes.”*

Uncontrolled anger blinds us to the facts and causes us to make illogical and unwise decisions.

Proverbs 14:17 [Good News Bible] *“People with a hot temper do foolish things, wiser people remain calm.”*

Haven’t we often said stupid things when hot with temper that we wish afterwards we could retrieve? Uncontrolled anger blinds our mind to wisdom and logic as well as love and compassion.

Proverbs 11:29 [Living Bible] *“The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left...”*

Whenever I lose my temper I lose.

We will never make it to the top if we are always blowing our top.

The word danger is just anger with a “D” for dunce in front of it; uncontrolled anger shows we are foolish.

We can lose everything through uncontrolled anger.

We can lose our husband, wife, family, job, reputation, health ... anything, through uncontrolled anger.

Reducing hostility in our lives can extend our life many years, for continual uncontrolled anger puts a great strain on our heart and causes ulcers.

We may have control over our children when young through their fear of our anger but we lose them in the end for anger always alienates people and destroys loving relationships.

c) Reflect before reacting in anger.

Proverbs 29:11 [New English Bible] *“A stupid man gives free reign to his anger, a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.”*

Perhaps this is where the modern term “cool it man” comes from!

Delay is a great tool in controlling anger.

I don't mean delay for a day for the Bible tells not to go to sleep

Ephesians 4:26 [NIV] *“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”*

We need to delay venting our anger long enough to consider what the response to our angry words or action is going to be.

The suggestion of counting up to ten before we reply in anger is a wise saying; at times we may have to count up to 100!

When we don't stop and think we almost always do or say the wrong thing.

We need to get into the habit of taking a “step back” when we begin to feel angry about a situation and reflect on what is happening before we respond in words or actions.

Proverbs 19:11 [Living Bible] *“A wise man restrains his anger and overlooks insults. This is to his credit.”*

The natural reaction when we are insulted is to get angry with the person who is insulting us. Our pride comes to the surface and bursts out in angry words and actions.

When we delay this natural response wisdom will prevail, our patience will be increased and a relationship will be strengthened instead of shattered.

All of these results will be on the credit side of our character building.

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The more we understand our children, husbands, wives, employers, employees and friends the more understanding we will have towards them and the less angry we will be with them.

To understand the situation that is about to erupt into an angry exchange we need to pause to ask ourselves the following questions.

1) Ask ourselves why am I angry!

Anger is never the root problem in our life, it is a warning light that tells us something is wrong.

Three major root causes of anger are hurt, fear and frustration: when we pause we need to consider which of these three is making us angry.

a) Hurt:- We are doing some woodwork and we miss the nail and hit our thumb with the hammer and we cry out “*thank you God*” ! No we don’t, we get angry with the nail, the hammer and ourselves, because we hurt. Any hurt in our life generates anger.

b) Fear:- When you back an animal into a corner where it fears it cannot escape it becomes angry. We react in the same way when we experience fear. When I fear that I am losing something I consider valuable I get angry, because what is part of me is threatened.

c) Frustration:- You have been patiently waiting in line to buy something that is in short supply when someone not waiting in line pushes past and grabs the last one. Frustration causes you to get angry, this wasn’t fair. No! Life is not fair; we will encounter many situations daily when our frustration can generate anger.

2) Ask ourselves what do I really want to happen?

Do I want this difference of opinion, or this desire for a need to be fulfilled, to ruin the relationship I have with this person who is confronting me with anger?

The logical, considered answer is no!

Always weigh the value of a relationship against the temporary satisfaction of getting what we want at this moment.

To make such judgements takes time, this is why we continue counting, 1, 25, 26, 27 ... before we react.

3) Ask ourselves how we can get our need fulfilled without anger?

Will my returning the anger I am now facing result in my need being fulfilled?

If we are honest we will be forced to say no! How then do we resolve this explosive situation?

Look for the hurt, fear or frustration behind the anger of the person who is venting their anger towards us or we towards them.

All this reflection will give time and space for wisdom to be applied to the volatile situation.

2) Release our anger appropriately.

Ephesians 4:26 [Good News Bible] “*If you become angry do not let your anger lead you into sin.*”

This scripture implies that we can be angry and **not** sin.

Not all anger is sin! God gets angry.

God created us with a capacity to be angry.

There are right ways and wrong ways to use anger.

There are helpful and harmful ways to use anger.

We need to express our anger in an appropriate way, for nothing can ruin a relationship more than anger released in an inappropriate way.

To deny we are angry when we are angry is a sin, it is called lying!

“*You’re angry*” ... “*No I’m not!*”

“Yes you are” ... “No I’m not!”

“I can tell you are” ... “NO I’M NOT!”

“Why are you yelling?” ... “I’M NOT YELLING!”

We would rather be angry than admit our anger.

We learnt to express anger when we were babies and many are still using the same method when adults. It just doesn’t work.

Most people express their anger in a way that takes them further away from their goal than they were before they were angry.

Exploding with anger towards people never produces lasting change, it only produces more anger and shattered relationships.

We have all experienced this negative result of expressed anger but we still seem to go down that path.

Most of us can get our needs met if we express our anger in an appropriate way.

Proverbs 29:11 [Good News Bible] *“Stupid people express their anger openly, but sensible people are patient and hold it back.”*

There is a myth in society about anger. Most people have accepted the theory that we all have a certain amount of anger in us and if we just ventilate it we will reduce this store of anger and become peaceful and feel better. Some psychologists tell people to *“just say what you: think it doesn’t matter what it does to others, vent your emotions.”* One therapy is even called *“scream therapy”*.

One problem with this theory: it does **not** work. We don’t have a store of anger that can be emptied; we have a factory in us manufacturing anger.

Every study, research or test group has shown that aggression always produces more aggression. My angry outbursts make me more angry, and anger in others.

Galatians 6:7 [NIV] *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”*

If we sow anger, we will reap more anger.

How then do we release our anger appropriately?

Don’t repress it:- don’t *“bottle up”* our anger. This can hurt us emotionally, physically and our relationships with others. Stored anger will eventually erupt inside in ulcers, heart attacks, headaches, etc.

“When we swallow our anger our stomach keeps score.”

Our body was not designed to live in a constant state of high alert with the adrenalin racing through it as it does when we are angry, we will just *“burn out”*.

Don’t suppress our anger:- Don’t pretend our anger doesn’t exist. We need to say we were hurt, threatened or fearful and I need to deal with this situation.

Don’t express our anger:- Not just blowing up for there are many other ways of expressing anger than being a volcano.

There is the *“pouter”* who uses facial expressions.

There is the “*manipulator*” who is constantly making snide remarks all the time, jabbing at the victim of their anger.

What do we do to release our anger appropriately?

We confess our anger.

Admit our anger to ourselves, to others and to God. “*I’m angry*”.

It is most important to confess why we are angry, the root of our anger. I’m hurt, I’m frustrated, I feel threatened by what you have said or done.

Deal with the issue, admit why we are angry.

d) Re-pattern our mind.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] “*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.*”

This is the only way we can deal with anger on a long term basis. The way we act is determined by the way we feel and the way we feel is determined by the way we think.

If we want to change the way we act we have to change the way we think.

Luke 6:45 [NIV] “*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*”

What we think in our mind is motivated by our heart, our heart being the driving force within our nature which is the spirit in us.

Job 32:8 [NIV] “*But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.*”

It is the spirit in us that motivates the thoughts that causes us to make the choices we do in life.

The renewing of our mind that Paul is talking about is allowing God’s Holy Spirit to join with our spirit re-patterning our thoughts, and hence our actions.

God changes our nature from the inside-out the only way permanent change can be made.

If I want to make a permanent change in my anger management I have to accept the indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit in my life.

Matthew 6:33 [NIV] “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

When I invite the Holy Spirit [Christ in me] to become the Director of my life, God will abundantly provide all my needs, so I will not experience anger when others do not provide for my needs.

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] “*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*”

A contented mind doesn’t have anger in it.

John 14:27 [NIV] *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

We don't experience the fear that can cause us to become angry, for we have peace of mind, the mind of the Prince of Peace.

Angry people are insecure people only God's promises to His people can give us security.

When we pick up a little baby who is crying because it is irritable, perhaps frightened and insecure; give it love, comfort and security in your arms and it stops crying and being angry.

When we understand how much God loves us and know the security that accepting Christ's sacrifice can bring. When we realise just how precious we are to God, like the little baby, our irritability, our anger will subside.

We can experience peace of mind and develop patience with others who are not blessed with that understanding and may be angry with us.

e) Relate to people who are patient

Proverbs 22:24-25 [NIV] *“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.”*

People who have not yet learnt to manage their anger, who “blow up” at the least provocation. Or they sulk or are sullen when things don't go the way they want. Such people are not the company we should choose.

The negative attitude of such people will very easily start to influence our response and frame of mind. Anger is contagious and very negative producing only more anger.

People who manage their anger are patient people and the more we associate with such people the more we become like them.

If we are serious about seeking a life that is one of total anger management we need to fellowship with people who have learnt to manage their anger.

Who are these people?

Galatians 5:22 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,”*

Notice at least two of the fruits are related to right anger management, patience and self-control. True Christian people, those who have a close relationship with the Holy Spirit are people who are learning right anger management.

The fruits of patience and self-control have “rubbed off” on such people as a result of their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

These fruits in their lives are a direct result of the “quiet time” they spend each day, away from the influences of this society, in the presence of the Holy Spirit, communing with Him.

We can become like these people by having fellowship with them when we join true Christian church fellowships and small groups.

In such loving groups we pick up right values when all the rest of the society is teaching us the wrong way to manage our anger.

All the violence and hatred in the world is living proof of what we will learn by constantly being part of this society.

If we sit in front of a TV we will see example after example of inappropriate anger management, and this wrong approach “*will rub off*” on us.

The news broadcasts will show it happening world-wide and the “*soaps*” and films will make us think that inappropriate anger management is acceptable in real life, because they are all full of anger and broken relationships.

What is such television teaching us and the young generation?

When you get angry yell at other people.

When you get angry become sullen and sulk.

When you get angry strike out at the other person.

When you get angry use a gun to silence the person who is making you angry.

We desperately need something to be a balance against all these inappropriate anger management models. A loving church fellowship is a good place to experience such an environment.

All anger is learnt so the good thing about prayer is that it can be un-learnt by:-

Resolving to manage our anger.

Realising the cost of wrong anger management.

Reflecting before we react in anger.

Releasing our anger in an appropriate way.

Re-patterning our mind to that of Jesus Christ.

Relating to people who are learning to manage their anger appropriately.

When we do this we can be a model for others to follow.

All successful relationships are the end product of right anger management.

Let us all learn together with our Creator’s help to tame our tempers.