



Recently, a friend emailed me a cynical chuckle. The cartoon showed an elderly couple sitting on a bench. The man leaned over and inquisitively asked his wife, “Whenever I get mad at you, you never seem to get upset. How do you manage to control you anger?”

Without hesitation, she replied, “I just go and clean the toilet.”

Puzzled, he asked, “How does that help?”

Straight faced, she answered, “I use your tooth brush.”

While I don’t recommend this method of anger management, I’ve been counseling couples for more than 30 years, and wouldn’t put it out of the realm of possibility for some marriages to try it. I’ve heard worse.

Anger management has been a problem ever since Adam sinned in the garden. The Bible is full of stories that tell about people who, in the middle of their anger, were enticed to sin. Because many people are still not dealing with anger in a healthy manner, we continue to discuss it.

So what is anger? In his Bible commentary, Barnes says that anger is an excitement or agitation of the mind. We generally experience anger when we are injured in a real or imagined way. Anger is usually accompanied by desires to express the pain we feel and/or take revenge.¹ I would add that anger can be a very helpful emotion if controlled since it lets us know when something is not right, especially in our relationships with God, ourselves, and others.

Whether we realize it or not, the emotions of anger come out of our thoughts or belief systems. As a counselor, I frequently hear “She made me angry.” or “When he does that, it makes me

so mad.” Those statements indicate the belief that others are in control of our emotions. When I hear those statements being made, I usually respond with the question “Do people make us angry, or do we choose to be angry based on what we think about what others have done?”

To help answer this question, let me create a scenario. Imagine that you and your family are driving into the city of Atlanta on an interstate near my home. You are keeping the speed limit and minding the rules of the road. Then, you look in your rear view mirror and see a crazy driver advancing very fast. The motorist zigzags in and out of traffic. Before you can glance back again, the driver has passed you and swerves in front of you.

At that moment, you feel fear and hit your brakes. Safe from injury, your fear quickly shifts to anger. You decide to see who the sorry sucker is that threatened your safety and “made” you angry. You put the pedal to the metal and become a crazy driver in order to catch up to the offender. You finally pull along side the car, and that is when you see that the crazy driver is Greg Brezina. Shocked, you think, “Of all people; and he calls himself a Christian. What a hypocrite. I’m going to call his office and let them know I’m not referring anyone else to his ministry for counseling. He is a hypocrite.”

So you get on your cell phone and call my office. You let our receptionist know what’s on your mind. She replies, “I’m so sorry that he cut you off, but Greg called about 15 minutes ago and asked us to pray for one of his sons who was in an accident and is dying at the hospital downtown (God forbid that such an accident ever does happen.). I am sure that Greg meant you no harm, he is just trying to get to the hospital before his son dies.”

What happened to your angry feelings? Most answer, “Well, now that I know the reason you are acting the way you did, I’m

not angry with you.” So what just occurred? The circumstances didn’t change. The offense still stands. I still put you and your family in jeopardy. But you are not angry anymore. Let’s go back to the original question. Did I make you angry by cutting you off, or did you choose to be angry based upon what you thought about what I did? I think the answer is obvious.

With that said, people and events can definitely provoke feelings of anger. They incite us when they threaten or attack things that we hold important or valuable. If you place value on your car and someone takes a key and runs it down the side of your car scratching off the paint, you will feel anger. How much anger you feel will depend on how much you value your car. For that reason, anger can be a very useful tool. It is a gracious signal that alerts us to check and see what we are thinking and believing.

Think about the oil light in an automobile. When the oil light blinks on in a car, we are alerted to the fact that something is wrong with the car. To determine the problem and to protect the engine from further damage, we should quickly stop at an auto repair shop or pull over and call for roadside assistance. When the problem is identified, it can be corrected. If the oil light has malfunctioned, we reconcile with our oil light and go on our way. However, if there is a major oil problem and we continue driving, the engine will eventually lock up or blow up. It always costs less to tighten a leaky oil filter and add some oil than it does to replace an entire engine.

In much the same way, our feelings of anger function as an “oil light” for our soul. When we feel our anger turn on, we should immediately stop in order to protect our soul from further damage. God demonstrates the urgency when He tells us to “not let the sun go down on your anger.”² If we do not choose to deal with our anger in a timely manner, one of two things will happen. Our soul will either lock up by stuffing our anger and we will injure our internal organs, or we will have an outburst of anger or rage and injure others and/or break things. Both stuffing and dumping are very unhealthy ways to deal with anger.

Once we choose to control our anger, we must immediately call the Mechanic to check out our soul. God is the able Mechanic because He created us and knows all things. He alone has the knowledge to diagnose why we are angry and to decide what, if any, action is needed. Scripture tells us “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”³ Scripture also says, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”⁴ So we can ask Father, “Why am I angry?” And, He will give us understanding about why we are angry.

When we ask God about our anger, He may reveal to us that it is a false alarm. Maybe we have misunderstood what someone said or did. If that is the case, the relationship can be easily reconciled through discussion and understanding.

Many times, however, we find that our anger has been aroused because someone has legitimately offended us or threatened someone or something we value. If this is the case, then we need to identify the problem and take the necessary steps to resolve or reconcile the relationship in a healthy manner.

God tells us the healthy way to deal with a brother or sister in Christ who has offended us.⁵ He says that we should first, in a spirit

of gentleness,⁶ talk to them privately about their offense. If the offender repents, we choose to forgive the offender. Our relationship is reconciled. Our anger will dissipate because we have forgiven the offender.

If the offender does not repent, we are to take two or three witnesses with us to confirm the offense. If the offender repents, we forgive and the relationship is reconciled. If the offender still doesn’t repent, we are to take our two or more witnesses and bring the issue before the church. If the offender refuses to listen to the church, we come to the resolution that the relationship may not be reconciled quickly and follow the Biblical admonition. Even if the relationship cannot be immediately reconciled, we can and must forgive the offender in order to release the anger.

Forgiving the offender when the relationship is not reconciled is not marginalizing the offense. Rather, it is saying that even though the offender has offended me deeply, I am releasing him or her completely from the debt he or she owes me. Therefore, I can be at peace even though the relationship hasn’t been reconciled. Forgiveness is the way I can keep a root of bitterness⁷ from growing in my heart, especially if the offender cannot be located or has passed away.

The only way to deal with an offense and the offender like this is to live out of Christ’s life. Scripture says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” When we submit our wills to His will, we can completely forgive those who have offended us by the Holy Spirit’s power. While we may not “feel” like forgiving those who have offended us, we can choose to submit to God’s command to forgive like we have been forgiven.⁸ When the enemy reminds us of the offense, and we find ourselves getting angry again, we recall to mind that we have forgiven the offender.

When we choose to obey God’s word and forgive others as we have been forgiven, we will experience the truth setting us free⁹ – free from the bondage of uncontrolled anger and all of the baggage of bitterness that comes with unforgiveness such as hatred, revenge, gossip, back biting, unkind thoughts and words, etc.

Love ya,



Greg Brezina

PS. If you feel like you are having a hard time dealing with your anger, you may want to seek counseling from another believer who has an intimate relationship with Father, is rooted in the Scriptures and living out of Christ’s life. If you live in the Atlanta, Georgia, area, we welcome you to come and talk to one of our counselors. If you live outside our area, you may want to come in for a couple of days of counseling. Or, if you e-mail or call our office, we may be able to refer you to a Christian counselor in your area of the U.S.

1 Barnes’ Notes On The New Testament
2 Ephesians 4:26
3 Proverbs 2:6
4 James 1:5

5 Matthew 18: 15-17
6 Galatians 6:1
7 Hebrews 12:15
8 Ephesians 4:32
9 John 8:32



"DO NOT BE EAGER IN
YOUR HEART TO BE
ANGRY, FOR ANGER
RESIDES IN THE
BOSOM OF FOOLS."
ECCLESIASTES 7:9



Anger Has Led To Sin When . . .

- 1 . . .** there isn't just cause for anger -- when we are in no danger, and do not need it for immediate self-protection.
- 2 . . .** anger is against the person or our selves rather than the offence. The object of anger is not to injure the offender; it is to protect our selves and others from harm.
- 3 . . .** anger is attended with overt or covert payback or revenge.
- 4 . . .** anger is held on to, cherished and heightened by meditation.
- 5 . . .** anger is used to lie or manipulate. (acting angry in order to control others)
- 6 . . .** the offense is someone else's responsibility.
- 7 . . .** anger is uncontrolled by stuffing or dumping it.
- 8 . . .** forgiveness doesn't follow anger.

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