

Anger (#2)

Joe Slater

God's anger is always righteous; ours seldom is. In most cases, human anger stems from selfishness of some sort (envy, pride, etc.). Honestly evaluating "why" we are angry can help us set it aside.

Another good question is, "**What fruit comes from your anger?**" Cain became angry when God rejected his offering while accepting Abel's; that anger led him to murder his own brother! In Ephesus the wrath of the Diana-worshippers resulted in a two-hour-long riot that threatened the safety of the Christians there. Jesus' enemies' anger produced multiple attempts to kill Him, the last of which succeeded. How can we not see the destructive nature of anger from these examples? Remember, "anger is only one letter short of danger!"

You can also use this question to determine whether your anger is justified: "**How quickly are you angry?**" Wise Solomon wrote, "*He who is quick-tempered acts foolishly*" (Proverbs 14:17). Here he again: "*Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools*" (Ecclesiastes 7:9). By contrast, "*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy*" (Psalm 103:8). Hot-headedness is no laughing matter! It demonstrates a lack of maturity and indicates you do not have the "fruit of the Spirit," one manifestation of which is self-control.

Finally, ask yourself, "**How long do you remain angry?**" Paul wrote, "*Do not let the sun go down on your wrath*" (Ephesians 4:26). Holding a grudge does nothing productive but demonstrates a resentful spirit unlike the patience and longsuffering of God.

Why are you angry? What fruit comes from your anger? How quickly are you angry? How long do you remain angry?

How Do You Feel About That?

Feelings seem to carry the day. How one feels about something appears to have become the ultimate consideration. It is as though feeling badly is the worst thing that could happen to a person, and heaven forbid that anyone would ever say or do anything that might hurt someone's feelings!

That is not to say that feelings are unimportant, or that we should be reckless and careless in dealing with the feelings of others. Kindness, gentleness, and compassion are evidence of God's Spirit at work in our lives (Galatians 5:22-25). Their absence is evidence of God's absence in us.

Still, we must be careful not to allow our feelings to have more sway and credence than they should. Avoiding all bad feelings isn't necessarily a good goal. As a matter of fact, some bad feelings are a good thing!

Consider the conscience. This is a God-given internal gauge or standard. If we violate our conscience we feel badly. That's how God wants it to be. This is a built-in warning system. The same can be said for feeling pain or feeling ill.

Back to the conscience – Paul made an amazing and instructive statement: "*Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day*" (Acts 23:1). Paul had lived successfully without violating his conscience. That's not saying he didn't learn after-the-fact that what he had been doing violated God's will. In fact, based on the nature of his prior sinful activity, he considered himself "*foremost of all sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15). But at the time of his actions, he believed they were right. His lack of the pain of a guilty conscience belied the guilt of his sin.

One can have no bad feeling, yet still stand condemned. Feelings aren't the final arbiter. Far more important than how I feel about something is how God feels about it.

--David Deffenbaugh (via *Old Paths*) adapted

FARE THEE WELL

"*He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true'*" (Revelation 21:5).

Earlier this week, my son Daniel departed for boot camp in the United States Coast Guard. To say his leaving was difficult would be an understatement. I've experienced Daniel's going away to camp and traveling to visit family, but knowing this departure is permanent changes everything. It is unfamiliar territory with which I am forced to acquaint myself. In this place, I find my emotions and reactions to be unpredictable.

Through it all, I've thought about the lyrics of an old song by Billy Joel that describes how quickly life situations change. The song states: "so many faces in and out of my life, some will last; some will just be now and then. Life is a series of hellos and goodbyes; I'm afraid it's time for goodbye again." Billy Joel certainly had it right, as the human experience far too often resembles revolving doors with people steadily coming and going.

God's word describes life's passing as "a mist" or "a vapor" (James 4:14); likewise, it equates to the fleeting march of time. Events quickly change. I know Daniel will be home in several weeks (Lord willing), and I realize future partings are inevitable. I know I'm not the first person to experience this and will certainly not be the last. I simply live for the time when separations will end and there will no longer be "*mourning or crying or pain*" – nor even death (Revelation 21:4).

"*He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son*" (Revelation 21:7 NASB).

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)