

Anger Issues

Ponder: When is it ok to be angry?

Scripture: "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Eccl. 7:9, NKJV).

When Scripture speaks of anger or wrath, God is usually the one who is angry. Since God is absolutely holy and righteous, anger can't be inherently wrong. Yet a multitude of passages in both testaments caution us against anger. Is it ever ok to be angry?

Motive matters! God asked Cain, "Why are you angry?" (Gen. 4:6). Ask yourself the same question. Cain had become angry when God rejected his worship while accepting Abel's. Our anger, like Cain's, usually comes from pride or selfishness. By contrast, Jesus showed anger when corrupt religious leaders disrespected the holiness of God's temple (Jn. 2:14-16). His righteous indignation was totally justified.

Also ask yourself, "How quickly do I become angry?" "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger . . ." (Psa. 103:8a). Many of us, on the other hand, have a short fuse (dangerous in both dynamite and people). "A quick-tempered man acts foolishly" (Prov. 14:17).

Then ask, "How long do I remain angry?" Paul quoted one of David's psalms in Ephesians 4:6, "Be angry, and do not sin.' Do not let the sun go down on your wrath." Even justified anger can become sinful if it degenerates into a grudge. Resentment harms your physical, emotional, and above all your spiritual wellbeing.

That being the case, the final question is, "What fruit comes from my anger?" Jesus' righteous anger produced renewed respect for God's house. Cain's prideful wrath resulted in the murder of his own brother. What a contrast! Which more closely resembles what happens when you become angry?

God's anger is always righteous. Ours seldom is, though there are exceptions. Why am I angry? How quickly do I become angry? How long do I remain angry? What fruit comes from my anger? Let these questions help you deal with anger issues.

Hymn: "Angry Words"

Prayer: Righteous Father, we thank You for the abundant caution You give in your word about anger. Please help us to control our temper and put away our pride. In Jesus' name, Amen.