

Dealing With Anger

Ponder: "Anger" is only one letter short of "Danger"

Scripture: ""Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26, NKJV).

Not all anger is sinful. Let's be honest, though: Most of the time when we are angry, it is sinful.

Over one hundred thirty times in both testaments, we read of the anger or wrath of God. His anger is every bit as righteous and good as His love, mercy, grace, et. al. Jesus demonstrated His anger at the beginning of His earthly ministry (John 2:15) and again at the end of it (Matthew 21:13) by cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem. Desecrating God's house and oppressing His people via price gouging did not set will with Jesus!

We can and should be angry when God's spiritual house (the church) is being degraded, or when people are being abused. Most of our anger, however, comes from selfish motives and often results in further sin. In the first instance of anger recorded in Scripture, Cain became angry when God rejected his sacrifice while accepting his brother Abel's (Genesis 4). The Lord pointedly asked Cain, "Why are you angry?" (v. 6). Cain's anger was unjustified. He simply needed to repent. Instead, he murdered his brother.

Jesus said that if we are angry without a cause, we are in danger of the judgment (Matthew 5:22). How, then, can we determine whether anger is justified? Such a conclusion requires at least two things: absolute honesty with self, and time. Solomon wrote, "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly" (Proverbs 14:19). Take time to cool off and evaluate all the facts evenhandedly. Usually you will find no legitimate reason for anger.

On those rare occasions when anger is justified, deal with it in a Christ-like way. Follow the steps Jesus laid out in Matthew 18:15-17. If the issue is not important enough to do this, then simply drop it. "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11).

Not all anger is wrong; but most of it is. "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry; for anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).