

Chapter 9



The Bitter Roots of Anger

**Bible Character – Cain – Genesis 4
Symptoms – Effects – Causes – Biblical Cures**

Introduction to Angry Thoughts

We are looking at bitter roots that spring up in our hearts and trouble us while defiling other people, according to Hebrews 12. In this chapter, we are looking at the Stinkin' Thinkin' of **angry thoughts**.

Almost everyone gets angry from time to time. Some of us externalize our anger. Others hold it inside, but we all get angry. Anger is a normal emotion. As we have said, all emotions are based on thoughts. Every negative emotion is based on a thought and usually those thoughts are not God's thoughts. Negative emotions are based on negative thoughts, thoughts that are not true. They are exaggerations. They might feel true, but in fact they are not.

Anger is not dysfunctional in and of itself. Anger is not abnormal. Anger is a normal human emotion. It is a natural response to injustice or wrong. Even God gets angry. Jesus got angry when he saw the Temple turned into a marketplace. Anger is not always sin. Paul said, "*Be angry and sin not. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath.*" (Ephesians 4:26) Anger then is justified in some cases. So as an emotion, we are not throwing anger out altogether.

The Situation (biblical character)

There is a biblical example of dangerous anger found in the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-15.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴But Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

⁸Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”^[d] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ⁹Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” ¹⁰The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ²When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

Cain and Abel were brothers. Cain was the firstborn and Abel was the youngest. On a certain day, when it was time to go to worship the Lord, the brothers both took sacrifices to offer to the Lord. Cain was a gardener, so he brought some of the fruit of his garden. Abel was a shepherd and brought a young lamb without blemish. The Bible tells us that God was pleased with Abel’s sacrifice, because it was a sacrifice to kill an innocent lamb. But Cain just brought fruit. There wasn’t anything spectacular, or even special, about his offering. Perhaps he had offered rotten fruit or spoiled vegetables to place on the altar, like the people in Malachi’s day, who offered diseased animals as their sacrifice and God was insulted.

But the story isn’t about the fruit or the lamb at all. It is about the attitude of the heart. Cain had a bad attitude about it. Perhaps he resented having to offer any sacrifice, feeling he worked hard by the sweat of his brow and deserved to keep the best fruit for himself. So, Cain got furious that his brother got God’s favor and he didn’t. God asked Cain, “Why are you angry?” It’s a good question to ask ourselves whenever we are angry. “Why are you angry? What made you mad?” God could see Cain’s heart, but he also saw his countenance and asked why his countenance was fallen. You see, anger boils and spoils, even our looks. A lost smile indicates something is wrong. A sad face reveals something is going on inside that is reflected on the outside.

The Bible doesn’t tell us what Cain answered. Perhaps, he answered nothing, just like a wife answers the husband when he asks, “What’s wrong?” Or maybe with a pouting face he replied, “Nothing is wrong.” So, the Lord nails the issue on the head and says, “*If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.*” You see, the problem was not just the anger. The anger was a symptom of a deeper issue. The problem was sin was crouching at the door of Cain’s heart.

In the very next paragraph, Cain invited his brother out into a field and killed him. Now that’s anger! Then, in an attempt to pass the blame elsewhere, he gave a smart aleck answer to God, “*Am I my brother’s*

keeper?” Then God put a curse on Cain and his descendants. He would have trouble cultivating crops and he would become a wanderer.

Let’s talk about the Dysfunction of Angry Thoughts.

All of us get angry. Let’s face it. Some get angry more often than others. Some have a short fuse, others have a long fuse. Some blow up in violent and verbal explosions, while others simmer quietly on the back burner of their minds. In either case, eventually anger will come out. It has to. Anger is an emotion and emotions need to come out from hiding or they will turn inward and cause other problems of health or emotional issues.

We need to understand that anger comes from our emotions, which is always triggered by our own thoughts. No anger has ever developed because of a chemical imbalance in your body. Someone might say, “That’s not true. My chemicals get really messed up sometimes. When that happens, I get really grouchy.” No, you get grouchy because your thoughts are grouchy. Your patience reaches its limit and your stress level rises. It’s your thoughts that create the anger. Otherwise, we could stand before God and say, “God, I’m not responsible for my actions. It’s not my fault I get angry.”

The Symptoms of Anger (his and ours)

Let’s look at the symptoms of anger in Cain’s story. The symptoms of anger were present in Cain’s life way before he killed his brother.

There was something of discontent in his soul (his thoughts) long before it exploded. Something triggered his anger. Usually it starts with a little thing. It could be unfairness. Injustice. Jealousy. Mistreatment. A hurt. Something or someone got in the way of his happiness. All anger is really about your inner discontent and turmoil. Something rubbed you the wrong way.

In Cain’s story, the trigger was a perceived unfairness. God did not accept his fruit offering, but accepted his brother’s animal sacrifice. God was, therefore, not treating him fairly. He felt he deserved a reward for his efforts, and he didn’t get it. Then he was jealous of his brother. Abel got a better grade than he did. That made him angry at Abel. He probably called him names, “Teacher’s pet. Daddy’s little favorite.” He felt since he was the oldest, he deserved to be treated better. He needed someone to blame, because it certainly couldn’t be his fault. Someone had to be blamed because you can’t punch God in the face. So, he looked for a scapegoat. God wasn’t being unfair. Cain just didn’t like the rules.

God said that, “*Cain became very angry, and his face was downcast.*” There’s a symptom of anger. His facial expression. His frown. His scowl. His pouting. His grumpy disposition. His short answers. His sarcasm.

Not everyone expresses anger in the same way. Psychologists tell us there are basically three ways we choose to express anger:

- Outward aggression – you express your anger by shouting, swearing, slamming doors, hitting or throwing things, being physically violent, threatening others, or being verbally abusive.
- Inward aggression – you might turn your anger inward, telling yourself that you hate yourself, denying yourself basic needs (like food or sleep), avoiding things that might make you happy, isolating yourself from other people, or even harming yourself, such as cutting your body.
- Passive aggression – you may express your anger by pouting, refusing to speak, acting grumpy, escaping through sleep, ignoring people, using drugs or alcohol, being sarcastic, implying you might hurt yourself, refusing to do normal tasks, being slow, being stubborn, or saying unkind things indirectly.

Signs of Anger

Effects of anger on your body

- Churning stomach
- Tightness in your chest
- Rapid heartbeat
- Your legs go weak
- Tense muscles
- Your face feels hot
- Run to the bathroom
- You start sweating
- You get a headache
- You twitch, shaking
- You get dizzy
- You grind your teeth
- You have chronic diarrhea

Effects of anger on your mind

- Feeling tense
- Feeling nervous
- Unable to relax
- Losing sleep
- Feeling Guilty
- Feeling Resentful
- Feel like crying
- Easily irritated
- Overwhelmed
- Feeling stressed
- Wanting to run away
- Wanting to get even

The Sources of Anger (causes)

The causes of anger

Let's look at the causes of anger in Cain's story. God stepped in to mediate Cain's anger. He asked him point blank, "*Why are you angry? Why is your countenance fallen?*" His answer is not given, perhaps he had none. We can imagine his excuse for his anger. "I was cheated! It's not fair that animals are better than my fruit. Who made that rule, anyway? I deserve a prize just like Abel, because we both tried hard. After all, I'm the firstborn. Doesn't that count for something?" Go ahead, you can fill in the blanks with what you imagine Cain might have said in his heart, if not out loud. Don't we all make excuses for being angry?

God continued, "*If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you (control you), but you must (learn to) master it.*" What a fantastic psychological evaluation God gave! The problem is sin inside of you. It desires to control you. What is inside of you? Thoughts, dysfunctional thoughts, lies of Satan, whispers from the enemy, all act as triggers to anger.

- (It made you angry.) "***Sin*** is crouching at your door"
- (It wants to control you) "***It*** desires to have you, to rule over you."
- (It, sin and Satan) "*You must master **it**.*" You must master your feelings or they will control (master) you.

God was pointing to the inner dialogue that was going on inside Cain's head. That "it" is the same "it" that the Apostle pointed out in Hebrews 12:2. "***(It)***, the sin that hinders and entangles." (12:1) "***(It)***, the bitter root springing up troubles you and defiles others." (12:15) "*Let **it** be healed, so the lame may not become disabled.*" (12:13)

Are you seeing the connection here? What God talked to Cain about in Genesis 4 is the same issue He addressed with us in Hebrews 12.

There Is Normal Anger

First, there is normal anger. Most anger is not normal anger. It's aggravated anger. God is one who expressed anger throughout the Old Testament. We find God is angry at sin and, at times, He is angry at sinners. He's angry at rebellion. But God does not sin. So anger is not sin. What we do with anger can make it a sin.

Jesus was angry. He came to the temple, and he found those that were doing money changing. They were in the Temple selling animals for sacrifices. They were doing business transactions in the Temple. So he threw them out. I mean, he was really angry. He actually made a whip and went through the Temple courts threatening them with it. I'm sure he was yelling. He said, "*You've made my Father's house a house of thieves, when it is supposed to be a house of prayer for all nations.*" So Jesus was angry. Did he sin? No.

It's impossible for God to lie or to sin. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and he did not sin. He would not have been able to offer his life as a sacrifice because he'd offer his own life for his own sins. That's the

law of God. Paul argued with Barnabas. The contention between them was so severe that they had to go their separate ways. They couldn't come to a peaceful resolution other than separation.

Psychologists tell us that when we're angry, when we're faced with a situation that causes our blood pressure to rise, causes our face to turn red and makes us feel threatened, there are two responses: "It is fight or flight." We will either fight the person who you're talking to with words or with violent emotions, or we will run away. We'll go home to cry. But either way, we are still angry.

I'm curious, how many of you cry when you're angry? I mean, you just sit down and have a good cry. That's one way of expressing anger. There are many ways to express anger and not just in violent ways.

Justifying Our Anger

We can't justify our anger by saying, "It's righteous indignation." I have a right to be angry. "My brother put his finger on my nose and that irritates me. He knows that irritates me. He got what was coming!" We can't justify our anger because much of our anger is way out of proportion.

There is Destructive Anger

I want us to see that there is destructive anger. There's good anger. God has it. Jesus had it. Paul had it. It can be useful. So when you get angry, get angry at the devil. Then you can let the sun go down on that one. Just be angry at the right things. Here are some things to look for in your anger.

- 1. When it is Violent**
- 2. When it is Abusive**
- 3. When it is Uncontrollable**
- 4. When it is Sudden**
- 5. When it is Frequent**
- 6. When it is Prolonged**
- 7. When it is Suppressed**

FIRST, when anger is violent or destructive.

Genesis 4:1-13 "*Cain killed Abel.*"

When anger is violent, it's always ungodly. There is no violence that is justified by the word of God because you're angry. There are many ways of expressing anger, but violence is never acceptable. I have seen anger vented violently first hand as throwing things, breaking things, punching things, slapping people, hitting people, and even harming oneself. (An attempt to get pity).

A husband who hits his wife with an open hand, a fist or an object is not acceptable anger. A wife equally should never hit, slap, punch, kick or spit at her husband (or anyone else, for that matter) ever.

A parent is never excused for hitting a child in anger. No spanking that turns into a beating is pleasing to God. Some would say, "But the Bible says, '*Spare the rod, spoil the child.*'" I believe in discipline, but if in your discipline you lose control, it is unacceptable. It's child abuse.

SECOND, when anger is abusive.

Matthew 5:22 "*Anger without a cause - name calling*"

Abusive language in anger is not acceptable to God, and it's certainly not acceptable in public places. Nor should it be used in private. When you're angry, you say things you don't really mean. Do you know that?

Name calling is often a means of venting one's anger. We've all heard the old ditty, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." But it is not true. Derogatory names hurt and leave permanent scars.

Curse words, vulgar language and obscene gestures are also not healthy ways to express anger. Over the years, it has shocked me to hear how many Christian homes use swearing and curse words. Some years ago, I was visiting a shut-in at her daughter-in-law's home. Normally the daughter-in-law was away at work when I made my visits, but this day she was home. When I approached the door to ring the bell, I heard loud shouting and curse words I'd expect from a drunken sailor. It was the daughter-in-law, a leader in our church. I quietly made my way back to the car and prayed for that poor elderly lady.

Sometimes children hear themselves called by abusive names and labels. Those epithets last a lifetime. Sometimes those words are accompanied with the physical abuse of pulling hair, grabbing the ears, or even dragging a child through the house kicking and screaming (the child, not the parent). One way to get a child's attention in Brazil was to grab your child by the ear and pull him around. Believe me, they'll go wherever their ear goes, but it leaves anger and bitterness in the child's heart. That kind of discipline is abusive and violent.

Remember the 10 cognitive distortions. Number 8 is Name Calling. Do you do it? Think about it. What are the names you call people when you are angry? Maybe you only think them, but they are still there in your mind. They are probably names you heard used while growing up.

THIRD: When anger is uncontrollable.

Ephesians 5:18 "*Don't drink wine wherein is excess*"

One pitfall of anger is when you have a temper. A temper is an explosive element of your anger. You have a hair trigger. Something sets you off and you explode in a torrent of rage.

Does your anger ever explode? My dad had a violent, uncontrollable temper. His dad probably had a temper too. I know that his great grandfather had a bad temper. At his funeral the priest said, "This was the worst man I've ever known."

I inherited my dad's temper. I realize now that temper can be related to not feeling loved, perfectionism, and having an inferiority complex. Those things do not excuse an uncontrollable temper, but they are contributing factors.

On one occasion, I lost my temper with my brother. My brother Mike was two years younger than me, but he had grown to be about my size. We were playing baseball in the back field. I don't remember the

cause of the fight, but Mike and I got into a real nasty argument that ended with us wrestling on the ground. He got me into a headlock, and to make matters worse, he was rubbing his knuckle in my hair for a Dutch Rub. That really infuriated me. I was shouting at him. I remember telling him he better never let me up because when he did, I would kill him.

He made the mistake of tiring out and letting me up. I got up in such a violent fury that I hauled off and punched him in the face with all my might. I heard a crack and Mike fell to the ground, screaming and holding his eye. His eye swelled shut and started bleeding. I immediately felt bad that I had injured my brother. My other brothers helped him into the house and mom and dad rushed him to the hospital. When mom heard what had happened, she told me to go to her room until she got back home.

When she returned, my brother had a patch over his eye and bandages. Dad went back to work and mom came into her room and gave me a lecture I'll never forget. She nailed me. She said, "Richard William LaFountain, you have your father's temper and if you don't get it under control someday, you'll end up killing someone." I knew she was right. I remember thinking that if I had a baseball bat, I would have smashed my brother's head in with it. Mom continued saying, "When you get angry, you lose all control. You go crazy and don't think about the consequences. You need to make a trip to the altar this Sunday and ask God to take it away."

I went to the altar that Sunday. I was sorry for losing my temper and hitting Mike so hard, but to tell truth I was proud when everyone asked who gave Mike that huge shiner. I asked the elders to pray with me over my temper and asked God to take it away. I am glad to say He heard my prayer and that violent temper never got the best of me ever again.

What do I mean when I say you're out of control? We use that term but don't always know what it means. It means you lost the control of your own spirit. You don't really lose your temper, you surrender it to someone or something. I surrendered to vengeance, getting even.

Paul warns us about anger and malice and bitterness. He says, "*Don't give place to the devil.*" So when we are out of control, someone is in control. If it's not God, and it's not you, then who is it? When you lose control, someone or something is controlling you. You've given place to the devil to work through your anger.

FOURTH: When anger is sudden.

1 Samuel 18:8-10 "Saul threw a spear at David."

It is not acceptable to God when we display temper. King Saul had sudden temper tantrums. It's called temper. Do you have a temper? Remember the story of Saul. He had sinned against the Lord several times. Initially, when he sinned against the Lord, the Spirit of God withdrew from him, not completely, but He withdrew himself and allowed an evil spirit to trouble Saul.

It says in Scripture, "*God sent an evil spirit to trouble him*" to drive him back to the Lord. But instead of driving him to the Lord, that drove him away. That is a scary thought!

One symptom of anger is a quick temper. Saul had a temper. When he had a fit of meanness, he was nasty to live with. He had hired David to come to the palace to play on the harp. The music would soothe his anger and he would simmer down.

If you have a temper, it might be good to put on some soothing Christian music to calm yourself. One day as David played on the harp, I don't know if he played a wrong note or what, but as he was playing, Saul grabbed his spear and threw it at David. His intent was to nail him to the wall.

Believers can have temper tantrums. I had an elder get out of his chair and rush at me with his fists. He later apologized, but the damage to that relationship was already done. Another time our church treasurer got into a fist fight in the narthex of the church. We are all embarrassed at the times when we or others lose their temper. It's not godly, and it's never justified.

I want you to look at your own life. Are you subject to fits of temper? Know this, it is not honoring to God. It is not pleasing to the Lord. It is not righteous indignation. It' sin.

FIFTH: When it is frequent.

Proverbs 29:22 *"Angry man abounds in transgressions."*

Proverbs 29:22 says, *"An angry man, stirs up strife and abounds in transgression."* How often do you get angry? I know people who are perpetually angry. They have a chip on their shoulder and all you have to do is bump them to set them off. It doesn't have to be a major issue either. Little things set you off. A word of criticism. Someone ignores you. A doctor's office makes you wait. Someone bosses you around. Someone cuts you off on the highway or flags you with a vulgar gesture. You walk around with a lit firecracker, daring anyone to cross you.

It's not once in a while. It's every day. If every time something doesn't go your way, you blow up verbally or physically, that's a problem. It's a thinking problem. There are angry thoughts, feelings of persecution, injustice and bitterness seething under the surface. When we rant and rave, fuss and fume, God is not in control. Something is wrong inside. It is not righteous indignation either. The Spirit of God is not moving on you. How many times a day do you get irritated, upset and angry? If it is frequent, you've got a Stinkin' Thinkin' problem.

SIXTH: When anger is prolonged.

Ephesians 4:26 *"Let not the sun go down on your wrath."*

That is when it's a long duration. Ephesians 4:26. *"Let not the sun go down on your wrath."* Paul says that one way anger is wrong is when you let the sun go down on your wrath. When you stay mad, you've given place to the devil. You've given him an opportunity in your life to afflict other people through your anger. Therefore, God says, resolve your anger before it festers into something worse. The same day that it comes settle it. Ignoring it is not settling it.

Bitterness is prolonged anger. Just because you stuff it down inside doesn't mean it's not there. It's still there, a festering sore underneath your facade of gentleness.

“Be angry and sin not.” Anger doesn’t go away by itself. Pretending you aren’t mad doesn’t help. Ignoring it will not help. I know in my life when mom and dad would get mad and had heated arguments, they didn’t physically abuse one another, but they had some knockdown drag out verbal battles that all of us heard.

Inevitably, as a child, I waited for dad to come back or mom to come back and make amends. I waited to hear the words, “I’m sorry, please forgive me for the way I spoke to you.” I never heard an apology. I hope they did it in private. But like many couples, they just simmered down over a day or two, and it passed.

I know couples who don’t talk to each other for days, sometimes weeks. The argument is never settled. Eventually, things cool off and life returns to normal, but there is no resolution, no apology, and no forgiveness. They sweep it under the carpet. It’s not forgiven. It’s fuel for the next argument.

There are many couples that believe that just covering your wrath with time, giving a little space, is going to make it okay. Time doesn’t heal all wounds. Until we deal with the anger by talking it out, reasoning it out, expressing how the event or words made you feel, it’s still unresolved. The words and the feelings expressed toward one another aren’t gone. They are still there. They are latent under the surface. It’s buried. It’s just waiting to pop up again.

When people come in to my office for marriage counseling, it’s rarely over one issue. It’s many unresolved issues stored away in their memories. There are layers of unresolved resentments that have gone unaddressed. They are things “swept under the carpet” but the dirt is still there. It’s under the surface, but they passed it off as though it didn’t matter. But it mattered. It’s a matter of the heart and the thoughts. Anger, when it’s prolonged, is wrong. It’s toxic.

Anger is always a thought issue. What destructive thoughts are you thinking when you are mad? Which of the 10 distortions are you practicing?

SEVENTH: When anger is suppressed.

Hebrews 12:15 *“Roots of bitterness spring up”*

Suppression of anger is like prolonging it, but it is even worse. It is when you pretend you’re not angry. Sometimes it is so suppressed that you don’t even know you’re angry. You deny it to yourself. You say, “It doesn’t matter. I’m not angry, I’m just hurt.” We love pretending. I remember my mom and dad having heated arguments on the way to church. As soon as we got out of the car, everything changed. Mom and dad were all smiles putting on their happy church faces. You know what I’m talking about. We know it happens. Don’t we all do it? We don’t always want people to know we are angry, so we hide it.

The problem with hiding anger is that it is a thought problem. The thoughts that created the emotion of anger are still there. Soon it will pop up somewhere else, either physically or as other emotional disturbances. Hebrews 12:15 says, *“Be careful, look diligently, lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble you and by it, many people are defiled.”*

Anger springs up like a troublesome weed with roots left in the ground. It’s like a pimple that turns into a boil. You can put *Clearasil* on it to cover it up, but it’s still there. It’s under the surface, ready to spring

up. It's an infection that needs to be dealt with. Many Christians practice suppressing their anger. They bottle it up inside. They push it down and pretend it doesn't exist. It usually shows up in physical ailments that are hard to diagnose.

You can't pretend away what is really there. Anger that simmers turns into bitterness. Bitterness is anger undercover. It's silent anger screaming somewhere in your body and in your mind and your soul to get out. It will eventually get out, either as sickness, or depression, or in some other symptom. It will come out.

The Sources of Your Anger

There are Anger Triggers

Anger always begins with thoughts. Have you ever had a sore spot on your hand, or you smashed your finger? You've got a fingernail that was ripped off, or you have a sliver, or you have a cut on your hand. It's very sensitive. Everything and everyone seem bent on touching you on that sore spot. You become super sensitive about that hurt.

How often do we do that emotionally? We have sensitive spots in our lives. They are trigger points for anger. There are areas that are really tender and just under the surface, there's a wound that is not healed. As people accidentally bump into that wound, it triggers your anger. It triggers what's underneath. It really does hurt, but you tell yourself it shouldn't hurt, but it does.

We need to understand that anger has triggers. Some things tick you off that don't bother other people. We use the term "He made me mad." That is incorrect. No one makes you mad. You get angry because deep inside, you have angry thoughts. I make me mad. My thoughts make me mad.

I heard a story, and allegedly it's true. There was a pastor who believed you could achieve sinless perfection. He said he no longer sinned. He was no longer tempted to sin. Sin had been eradicated from his heart. He was sinlessly perfect. He was pontificating in front of other brothers in a church fellowship. He bragged that he no longer lost his temper and no longer had a problem with any sin. Another preacher overheard this, but didn't believe in total sanctification and sinless perfection. Being a clever guy, he had a glass of ice water in his hand. As this man went on and on how God had removed his sin nature, this brother threw the glass of water right in his face.

Well, the brother who had lost his sinful nature suddenly became very angry and cursed. He was so shocked by the ice water that he lost his temper. When he settled down, he demanded to know why the preacher threw ice water all over him.

The preacher responded, "Oh, I just wanted to see if you really eradicated the old nature. Evidently, brother, some of it is still there."

What Makes You Angry?

What are your anger triggers? What makes you mad? What are your hot buttons? In our Appendix we have given you an **Anger Inventory**. Take the test to see just how bad your anger may be. You need to take the test when you're having a bad day. I have found that we are basically dishonest about our imperfections. When you're mad, you are more likely to answer these statements truthfully.

- When things aren't under your control. (frustrated)
- When things don't go your way. (shouting or pouting)
- When others get in your way. (pouting or shouting)
- When you are treated unjustly. (embarrassed, insulted, cheated)
- When someone disrespects you. (stepped on your toes)
- When someone criticizes you. (you're hurt, devastated)
- When someone disagrees with you. (you're furious)

Your Assignment

Thinking Questions:

Understanding how you get angry is important. It is part of understanding yourself. Let me ask you a few questions. Why do you get angry? How do you show your anger? What makes you angry? When do you get angry? Who or what makes you angry most often?

Discussion Questions:

With whom do you most often get angry? What is the worst anger you have ever felt? What is the worst anger someone has vented on you? Who is the angriest person in your family?

We can't say, "It's not my fault that I get angry. If you knew my wife you'd understand. I'm not responsible." It is important to understand our thoughts are in control of our emotions all the times. Our thoughts create all of our emotions and our thoughts create anger.

Do a Self-Inventory:

I get angry when I'm...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> irritated | <input type="checkbox"/> maligned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> made fun of |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insulted | <input type="checkbox"/> the butt of a joke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disrespected | <input type="checkbox"/> injured physically |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hindered | <input type="checkbox"/> hurt feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disobeyed | <input type="checkbox"/> griped at |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ignored | <input type="checkbox"/> nagged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> contradicted | <input type="checkbox"/> lied to |
| <input type="checkbox"/> obstructed | <input type="checkbox"/> lied about |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rebuffed | <input type="checkbox"/> gossiped about |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cussed at | <input type="checkbox"/> blamed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> put down | <input type="checkbox"/> shamed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> things go wrong | <input type="checkbox"/> robbed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> called names | <input type="checkbox"/> cheated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> accused | <input type="checkbox"/> slapped in the face |

Judge your anger level. 1-10, ten being outrageous fury!
Our Appendix has more surveys on anger.

Ten Distorted Thought Patterns

Untruthful Thoughts (lies of Satan)

1. All-or-Nothing (expecting perfection)
2. Overgeneralization (Murphy's law, pessimism)
3. Mental Filter (gloom and doom)
4. Disqualifying Positives (minimizing good things)
5. Mind Reading (reading people's thoughts, motives)
6. Fortune Telling (predicting disaster)
7. Magnification (dwelling on small things, blowing them up)
8. Should-itis (demanding fairness, blame and shame)
9. Name Calling / Labeling (derogatory name calling)
10. Personalizing Everything (feeling responsible, pity party)

Your Angry Thoughts

All anger comes from within. All emotions begin with thoughts. Therefore, we need to search our hearts for the whispers of Satan's lies that rattle in our brains. What are the angry thoughts and beliefs that provoke you to anger?

Recurring Thoughts of an Angry Person

1. That just ain't right
2. That's not fair.
3. Who gave them the right?
4. Don't interrupt me.
5. Stop telling me...
6. Why don't you shut up?
7. She/he aggravates me.
8. I can't stand him/her.
9. I hate it when they do that.
10. I'm so mad I could swear!
11. I'd like to give her a piece of my mind.
12. How dare they speak to me like that?
13. I've got rights too, you know.
14. If I had a gun I'd shoot him.
15. Stupid idiot!
16. What a jerk!
17. I'd like to give him a taste of his own medicine.
18. He can go to hell.
19. I hope he drops dead.
20. If I ever get my hands on him I'll...
21. I'd like to get even.

Be sure to visit the Appendix for exercises and help in overcoming anger. Keep track of your anger levels. Are you mildly irritated, aggravated, simmering, really ticked-off, hateful, spiteful, revengeful, or stark raving mad?

God's Cure for Anger

God gets angry and Jesus got angry, so we know that the emotion of anger is not wrong or sinful. Anger needs to be managed in a godly way so that it does not harm us or other people.

First, examine your thought life.

Anger is an emotion. Emotions are always created by thoughts, therefore, we must examine our thoughts to judge whether they are truthful thoughts or emotional exaggerations. God suggested to Cain that sin was crouching at his door and if he did not deal with it, it would overpower him. By evaluating your thought life and your secret self-talk, you will be able to judge what is truthful and pleasing to God and what is not.

Second, challenge those thoughts that cause emotional damage.

Dysfunctional thoughts hurt you before they hurt anyone else. Anger has the power to destroy not just your enemies, but destroy you from within. It can cause high blood pressure, headaches, palpitations, stomach trouble, ulcers, and a myriad of other health issues. Silent anger is as deadly as demonstrative anger. Deal with the angry thoughts, not just with your outward manifestations of anger.

Third, resolve angry conflicts quickly.

It is possible to be angry and not sin. Hiding your anger is not a good strategy for the reasons expressed above. Eventually, your anger will have to be dealt with. It is best to do it cognitively and not stuffing it down deep inside. Hiding anger is not healthy. Matthew 18 gives us explicit instructions of what we should do when a brother offends us, or whenever there is an unresolved issue with someone who is angry. We need to resolve it quickly and not let a day go by. Of course, take it to the Lord in prayer first. That is part of evaluating whether your anger is sinful or righteous anger.

Fourth, make peace of heart your goal. *“As much as lies within you live peaceably with all men.”* (Romans 12:18) Peace with others begins with inner peace. A peaceful heart is at peace with others and the world. Proverbs 14:30 says, *“A peaceful heart gives life to the body.”* The Apostle Paul said *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”* And Proverbs 17:22 says, *“A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”* So, don't be so touchy. Many anger issues have to do with touchy or sensitive emotional areas in our lives. Feeling unloved, insecure, demanding perfection, anxiety, worry, fear, a complaining spirit and depression are intertwined like threads of a rope. They are tightly woven together. They are like dominoes stacked upright in close proximity, when one topples, all the others will topple with it.