

Anger - July 15, 2023

Anger was created by God. In its purest form of “righteous indignation”, anger is okay. God was angry at the Israelites for worshipping idols (Exodus 32:7-10), at the hardness of the Pharisees hearts when He healed on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5), and at the Jews for turning His temple into a marketplace (John 2:13-17).

In Ephesians 4:26, it is said to “be angry but do not sin”. The anger of God was not sinful in the aforementioned texts. For anger to be righteous indignation, it must meet the following:

- Not be of personal provocation or wounded pride
- Not have sinful motive
- Not lead to sin

Anger is capable of leading to sin if, obviously, it has sinful motives. But furthermore, even good anger can lead to sin. Of Ephesians 4:27, commentator Francis Foulkes writes, “Sudden instinctive indignation against injustice or wrong, good in itself, if retained and nursed as a grievance, will let the devil lead his victim on to unkind thoughts, works and actions, and so work havoc with personal relationships.” Ephesians 4:27 describes this as a foothold for the devil. It is also said that the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20). If allowed to make a foothold, this sin can come out verbally and physically, leading to hurt. Damage due to the tongue is described in James 3:6 as the little flame that kindled the forest fire. This is echoed in Proverbs 15:1, which says that soft words turn away anger, but harsh words ‘stir up anger’. On a contrasting note, Proverbs 17:27 says, “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.”

To experience anger righteously, one must assess if the anger is righteous, and if so, must harbour it carefully. James 1:19 says to be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (Proverbs 16:32, 19:11; Psalm 103:8; Ecclesiastes 7:9). Proverbs 15:18 further says, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.” This requires self-control and discernment. It is also important to deal with anger. Ephesians 4:26 says, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger”, implying that one shouldn’t go to bed angry.

One should also be cognisant if someone is being a stumbling block to them. In Proverbs 22:24-25, it says, “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.”

If anger is tested to be righteous, how does someone maintain self-control and deal with it properly? Psalm 4:4 says to meditate and be still. Forgiveness is also important. In Leviticus 19:17-18, it says, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you commit sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.”

When I'm feeling emotions that lead to anger, I commit to doing the following in the moment:

1. Taking a deep breath. Could include a long exhale. Alternatively if I can, I will go on a walk
2. Pray for discernment and wisdom. Possibly for whether or not my anger is justified and how to deal with it.

Furthermore, I commit to resolving my anger before bed.