

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 22, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

YOU AND YOUR PROBLEMS

“The Problem of Anger”

Ephesians 4:26-27

One of the most persistent and disturbing problems the Christian faces is his anger. It has a way of disarming and frustrating him or her, of taking away his or her testimony, of affecting most every area of his or her life. In wrestling with anger, our resolutions to improve seem as futile as our attempts to keep it in check. It comes in many forms... from irritation all the way up to rage and uncontrollable temper... from inner uneasiness to actual displays of violence.

I. A DEFINITION OF ANGER

“Anger is an emotional reaction to hostility that brings personal displeasure, either to ourselves or to someone else.” – Dr. Charles Swindoll

“A strong feeling of displeasure and usually of antagonism. Emotional excitement induced by intense displeasure.” - Websters

Synonyms of Anger: ire, rage, fury, indignation, wrath

II. VARIOUS PHASES OF ANGER

This emotion does not remain the same. Unchecked, it moves through stages of intensity.

5 Stages of Unchecked Anger:

Stage 1: Anger begins with mild irritation – The irritation may perhaps be innocent. It is a mild feeling of discomfort brought about by someone or something. Like something itching on our skin it can irritate to the point that it grow and must be scratched.

Stage 2: Anger turns from irritation to indignation – Indignation is the feeling that something must be answered back, that there must be an avenging or a punishment. This can go unexpressed... and therefore grows

Stage 3: Anger changes from indignation to wrath – Wrath has the idea of expression. This stage turns from feelings to expression... I’m going to get even.

Stage 4: Anger switches from wrath to fury – Fury characterizes violence, a loss of emotional control.

Stage 5: Anger grown from fury to rage – Rage is a temporary loss of sanity.

III. OBSERVATION REGARDING ANGER (Ephesians 4:26-27)

²⁶ *“In your anger do not sin”^[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. – Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)*

²⁶ *“Be angry, and do not sin”:^[a] do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil.” – Ephesians 4:26-27 (NKJV)*

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is perhaps one of the most practical components of the New Testament. Chapter 4 offers us down-to-earth advice about the problem of anger. From the text (vv.26-27), three critical observation can be made.

3 Three Observations About Anger from Ephesians 4:26-27:

1. **Anger is a God-given emotion** – Just as God has given us the emotion of compassion, He has given us the motion of anger. Our pattern of emotions was designed by Him. Just as there is something inhuman about one who never shows love, so it is with the person who show no anger. The text says, *“Be angry...”*
2. **Anger is not necessarily sinful** – The text is qualified, *“Be angry, and do not sin...”* That means when there are actually times when the emotion of anger is appropriate and good... and even helpful. If we are angry (having just cause), we are not to carry that anger to the point of sin.
3. **Anger must have safeguards** – The apostle Paul put it this way, “... do not let the sun go down on your wrath (anger), nor give place to the devil.” Thus we have two safeguards to be considered:

2 Safeguards to Anger:

Safeguard 1... We must not prolong our anger into the night - In Paul’s day the closing of the day occurred with the setting of the sun, hence the idea “... do not let the sun go down on your anger...” We cannot afford to sleep on wrong feelings. Forgiveness must be in our heart at day’s end. Why? In **Matthew 6:15** Jesus gave us this strong warning, *“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* (NIV) or as the New King James says it, *“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*

Safeguard 2... We must not express our anger in such a way that we are weakened and the devil produces his character through us - Unchecked anger may lead to satanic involvement in our lives. In Matthew, the 16th chapter, just following Peter’s great confession of Christ as the “Son of the Living God.” Jesus begins to the disciples what is about to happened to him... he will suffer and be abused, and eventually killed at the hands of the Jewish religious leader. Peter becomes “angry” and in verse 22 Peter’s perhaps “righteous indignation” turns from irritation to indignation and then to wrath, fury and maybe even rage as he begins to rebuke Jesus in Matthew 16:22. Jesus words to Peter in **Matthew 16:23**, *“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the thing of God, but the things of men.”* Do you see it? Why did Jesus use such a harsh rebuke of Peter as to essentially call him “Satan”? What did he see in Peter’s mind (heart) when he said “you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”? Unchecked anger at it’s worst... perhaps in

Read: Mt. 16:21-23

Peter's mind was murder, "I'll kill them first, before they kill you!" and at least an unwilling to yield to what might be God ultimate plan... Jesus' death on all of mankind's behalf, even those who would kill him. The point, anger out of control weakens who we are in Christ, obscures our perspective (Christian perspective)_ and brings us more in like with the enemy who came to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10)

IV. EXAMPLES OF JUSTIFIABLE ANGER (Selected Scripture)

The following instances are by no means exhaustive; however, they do a great deal to help us shape a right perspective on the issue. When is anger justifiable?

3 Biblical Examples of Justifiable Anger:

1. **When God's Word and will are consciously disobeyed by God's people (Exodus 32:19-20)** – Exodus 32:19-20 says, *"¹⁹ When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it."* This passage gives us account of justified anger held by Moses, who, after receiving the ten commandments, returned to the base of the mountain only to find God's people, whom He had just delivered in miraculous fashion, dancing before the golden calf in lewd and profane fashion. Moses was angry and so was God. Back up to verses 7-14 and notice what was going on here, *"⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. ⁸ They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' ⁹ "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." ¹¹ But Moses sought the favor of the LORD his God. "O LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.'" ¹⁴ Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened."* God's anger is always justified, and it only by His great mercy and grace that we not consumed for our own rebellious ways just like the Israelites here. He is Sovereign God and He is always just and righteous in His acts. Here we see that God's anger was justified, but so was Moses. When God's Word and will are consciously disobeyed by God's own people, it ought to upset us.
2. **When God's ways are standards are twisted and perverted for personal gain and advancement (Isaiah 5:20-25)** – In Isaiah 5:20-25 we read these words, *"²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in*

their own eyes and clever in their own sight. ²² *Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks,* ²³ *who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.* ²⁴ *Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel.* ²⁵ *Therefore the LORD's anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”* From the prophesy of Isaiah (Isaiah 5:20-25) we find stern warning to those who change God’s standards and values into distortions, replacing them with what seems best from a sinful, rebellious perspective. Three times this warning, “woe,” is used. The closing lines of his warning are in **verse 22-23, “Woe to those who... deny justice to the innocent.”** God’s anger is justified and so is our when, we see the perversion of God’s ways, principles and standards distorted and replaced, shaped and snipped to fit what will make for man’s own advancement and benefit. Can you think of a present day example of this? How about the “Health, Wealth and Prosperity” preacher who are profiting today from unwitting believers who are told that if you will just sent in \$100 to this or that ministry, God will bless you... you will be healed... you will being to prosper... you will be healthy again... your wish will come true! I don’t know but that angers me!

- 3. When children are dealt with unfairly by parents or adults who know better (Ephesians 6:4 & Colossians 3:21) -** Ephesians 6:4 says, *“Fathers, do not exasperate (provoke) your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”* The New American Standard says, *“Father’s do not provoke your children to anger...”* And Colossians 3:21 says it like this, *“Fathers, do not embitter (provoke, exasperate), your children, or they will become discouraged.”* In both these passages Paul established the point that fathers have not right to provoke or exasperate their children’s anger. When children are unfairly handled or openly mistreated, our anger – when aroused – is justified. What we feel on the children’s behalf is right. With children in His arms, Jesus said in Mark 9:42, *“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown in the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.”* I’m tell you I would not every want to be or contribute to the multi-billion dollar industry today that mistreats children (i.e. the abortion industry, child pornography, child abuse and exploitation, etc.)

Is it possible that this is the first time that you’ve ever really thought of anger as God-given. Maybe you have never considered anger as justifiable. Can you think of some incidents from your past experience when anger was justified?

How do we handle the tension between verses like Ephesians 4:26-27, ²⁶“In your anger do not sin”^a: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.” and James 1:19-20, ¹⁹“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”?

V. EXAMPLES OF UNJUSTIFIABLE ANGER (Selected Scripture)

As in the previous, these instances are not exhaustive... only representative. However, each one cited represents something sinful. When is anger unjustifiable?

3 Biblical Examples of Unjustifiable Anger:

1. **When anger comes from the wrong motive (Luke 15:25-32)** – Here it is, ²⁵ *“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”* In Luke 15:25:32 we have a situation where the anger sprang from the motive of jealousy. The prodigal son (as we know him) had a prodigal brother. The former gets all the press, but the latter deserves our attention here. The other prodigal’s bout with anger occurred when his repentant brother returned home after a season of loose living. The father’s arms openly received the wayward son; the brother’s arms were closed. When Jesus presented this illustration, He said of the other prodigal, “The older brother became angry and refused to go in (to the celebration)...” Speaking impudently to his father, he said, “Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders... but when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes come home, you kill the fatted calf for him!” This discussion was stained by jealousy, but that is not the impure motive that can provoke unjustifiable anger... there is pride, selfishness, lust, greed, hate, revenge, embarrassment, hurt and a whole host of other improper motives that can spur an anger that is never justified or okay. Those wrong motive are always a sign of a deeper spiritual problem that is being manifested in an outward expression of anger. *Note: Beware of trying to justify your wrong motives, but calling it “righteous indignation.” That might be what the elder son was doing here!*
2. **When anger occurs because we don’t get our way (Jonah 3:10-4:9)** – In Jonah 3:10 through 4:9 a prophet of God lost the battle with anger. He witnessed an entire city and people, that he happened hated and despised, turn to God (Nineveh had a population of about 500,000... possible more like a million in women and children). Though he was a prophet, he was a bigoted racist. He did not want to see the people turn to God... instead he wanted to see Nineveh destroyed. Because he failed to get his way, he went off in a huff, to a hillside and sulked in his anger. Listen to **verses 1-4 in Jonah 4,** ¹ *“But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. ² He prayed to the LORD, “O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” ⁴ But the LORD replied, “Have*

you any right to be angry?" Anger can never be justified simply because things didn't turn out as we thought they should, or because we didn't get our way. That is a sign of a deeper spiritual problem.

3. **When anger comes because we react too quickly, without knowing all the facts (Ecclesiastes 7:8-9, James 1:19)** – Both the counsel of Solomon and of James, the half-brother of Jesus – illustrate this point. Note their words in Ecclesiastes 7:8-9, ⁸*"The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. ⁹ Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools."* Extremely wise counsel! And James 1:19 again says, *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* Sometimes we get angry because we react, rather than to wait on the Lord and let Him bring everything to light. Don't be too hasty in making judgments and calls before you know all the facts. It may only lead to unjustifiable anger. Listen to Proverbs 14:16-17, ¹⁶*"A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless. ¹⁷ A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated."*

VI. EXHORTATIONS ON DEALING WITH ANGER (Selected Proverbs)

1. **Learn to ignore petty disagreements** – The old saying, "Chose your battle wisely" hold true here. There are something that is better to just let go so "Let it go!"

"The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression." – Proverbs 19:11 (NKJV)

"It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel." – Proverbs 20:3 (NKJV)

2. **Refrain from close association with anger-prone people** – Anger-prone people, friends, family and associates can quickly spread their disease. A person prone to easily anger may cause the same reaction in you.

"A man of great wrath will suffer punishment; for if you rescue him, you will have to do it again." – Proverbs 19:19 (NKJV)

²⁴ Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, ²⁵ Lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul." – Proverbs 22:24-25 (NKJV)

3. **Keep close check on your tongue** – Not only should we be careful that our words don't stir up anger, but also that we lean to put the fire out rather than to stoke the flames. This in not just about not speaking, but being careful when you do speak... speaking wisely, with careful words. It is sometimes helpful to check yourself that your words are not a knee-jerk reaction in a given situation. We say, "Stick and stone may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." That is simply not true! Words do hurt and sometimes are the surest kindling for the fires of anger.

“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” –Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV)

“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.” –Proverbs 21:23 (NKJV)

4. **Cultivate honesty in communication without letting anger build up** – Say what you mean and mean what you say. As scripture says, “Let your yes be yes and your no, no!” (James 5:12) Cultivate honesty in your communication

“⁴ Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy? ⁵ Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. ⁶ Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” –Proverbs 27:4-6 (NKJV)

5. **If anger is not controlled, it will destroy you** – Anger, like bitterness and resentment, is a spiritual cancer to the soul. It will destroy you and take it’s toll physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.” –Proverbs 25:28 (NKJV)

“Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” –Proverbs 29:20 (NKJV)