

How to Help A Friend Struggling with Anger

I. God and Anger

- A. The Bible teaches that _____ manifests righteous anger (Ps. 7:11, Rom. 1:18, John 3:36)
- B. God's anger is an _____ of His goodness, His righteousness, and His holiness. It is a just and appropriate response to all things contrary to His character, including wickedness, sin, and evil. Thus, God's anger is righteous and not sinful (James 1:13, Lev. 11:44, Pss. 2:11-12, 5:4-5)
- C. _____ was righteously angry on rare occasions but never sinned (Matt. 21:12-13, Mark 3:5, Heb. 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22)
- D. Though the capacity for human anger may be linked to being made in the image of God, sin has so twisted the human heart that human righteous anger, untainted by sin, seems _____ (cf. Eph. 4:26)

II. What is Anger?

- A. "Anger is our whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil." – Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger* (P&R), 15.
 - 1. "whole-personed"
 - 2. "active response"
 - 3. "negative moral judgment"
 - 4. "against perceived evil"
- B. "Anger is the rising up of the heart in passionate displacency against an apprehended evil, which would cross or hinder us of some desired good." – Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (Soli Deo Gloria), 284.
- C. Anger is manifest in two main forms:
 - 1. _____ anger (explosive, outbursts, violence, yelling, shock & awe, kill people & break things). This form of anger is usually called "wrath" in Scripture.

2. _____ anger (internal, slow boil, clam-up, replay over & over, bitter self-talk, internal resentment, coldness, bitterness, withdrawing). This form of anger is usually called “anger” in Scripture.
- D. Anger _____ achieves God’s righteous purposes (James 1:20)
- E. Anger is _____ by other vices and leads to further sins. It rarely appears alone (Gen. 4, Eph. 4:31, Gal. 5:19-21, Col. 3:8).
- F. Anger is mental _____ carried out in the heart (Matt. 5:21-22, James 4:3)
- G. Like all sin, anger is _____ (Heb. 3:13). We are prone to minimize it, be blind to it, make excuses for it, call it normal, believe it is justified, or think we can’t control it (Baxter, 285).

III. Why Does Anger Happen?

- A. Anger originates from our sinful _____ (Mark 7:21-23, cf. Ecc. 11:10)
- B. Anger reflects the internal _____ of our desires and our worship (James 4:1-3)
1. Disposition (“pleasures,” “spend it on your pleasures”)
 2. Desires (“lust,” “envious”)
 3. Detonation (“quarrels” “conflicts,” “murder,” “fight”)
- C. At its root, anger is _____: putting self in place of God (Rom. 1: 25, 12:19, James 4:3).
- D. People and circumstances do not _____ us angry, they are only the occasions in which our hearts are revealed (James 4:1-3). Anger is a response and a person is fully responsible for it before God (Ps. 37:8, Eph. 4:31).
- E. Without quick, consistent repentance, anger turns into bitterness and resentment fueled by _____ influence (Eph. 4:26-27, 31).
- F. Occasions of being _____ or sinned against are often occasions for anger turning quickly to bitterness, resentment and the desire to retaliate (Rom. 12:17-21)

G. Anger in the heart is developed, reinforced, and refined into _____ through two main influences: the example of others (Prov. 22:24-25) and consistent practice until it becomes habitual (Prov. 19:19)

IV. How to minister to a friend struggling with anger

A. Make yourself a _____ vessel for ministry by removing your own “logs” of anger first (Matt. 7:3-5, 2 Tim. 2:21). Be an example first, then a wise counselor (cf. Ezra 7:10, Deut. 6:6-7).

B. Ask lots of questions. Get information. Discover your friend’s pattern of anger:

1. With whom am I typically angry?
2. In what contexts am I likely to get angry?
3. Under what circumstances am I likely to be angry?
4. How long am I angry?
5. Do I tend to blow up, clam up? Volcano or slow simmer? Deny it? Attack a substitute? Leave?

C. Expect that your friend will have a _____ view of his anger. Teach him what the Bible reveals:

1. Most think that anger is a _____ and normal response to their difficult circumstances and the mistreatment of others.
2. Some even think that not _____ or “validating” anger is the real source of people’s problems.
3. Yet the Bible clearly and consistently calls people _____ to be angry (Ecc. 7:9, James 1:19-20, Rom. 12:19, Eph. 4:31, Ps. 37:8)
4. Instead, believers are called to a radically different _____ to people and circumstances which ordinarily would be occasions for anger (Matt. 5:44, 22:39, Rom. 12:18, Eph. 5:25)

D. Anger must be un-masked. It often wears _____. Help your friend to see his anger for what it is. The mirror of God’s Word is both powerful and penetrating (Heb. 4:12-13).

E. Call for your friend to take ownership and _____ for his anger. Help him to stop blaming others or circumstances and instead focus on removing his own “logs” (Matt. 7:3-5).

F. Help your friend _____ the lies and lusts of his anger (James 4:1-3). Identify thinking and ruling desires that are governing the heart.

1. What did I want that I didn't get?
2. Is there something I want too much?
3. What was I telling myself in the moments leading up to anger?
4. What do I think I deserve?
5. What do I expect of others?
6. What do I think I need?

G. Lead your friend to confession & repentance for his _____ (Pss. 32, 51, 1 John 1:9, Luke 17:3-4).

H. Anger, like all sin, must be _____ in order to be defeated (Eph. 4:22-24, 31-32). Replacement should be comprehensive: all desires, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, words, and actions need to be replaced. Make a chart!

1. Ask for God's help and wisdom (James 4:2b, 3). Remind yourself of sufficient grace to change because of union with Jesus (Rom. 6).
2. Identify and “put-off” any desires, thoughts, or beliefs that are sinful (Eph. 4:22, Rom. 12:2a). “Purge your personal pantheon of idols” – Rick Holland
3. Renew those desires, thoughts, and beliefs by looking to God's Word (Eph. 4:23, Rom. 12:2b)
4. Replace and “put-on” righteous desires, thoughts beliefs, and motives built on the worship of Jesus Christ alone (Eph. 4:24)

I. Work with your friend to develop a specific battle _____ for anger:

1. Memorize helpful Bible verses

2. Identify your person pattern – develop a “plan for righteous responses”
3. Meditate on the truths of God’s Word daily. Ask for His help regularly. Review your plan.
4. Consistent practice of righteous responses is the key to growth and change (1 Tim. 4:7b-8)
5. Quickly stop and repent when you begin to respond in anger. Don’t pretend it didn’t happen. Don’t ignore it. Confess and seek forgiveness quickly (Eph. 4:26)
6. Keep an anger journal to help you
7. Monitor your thoughts and “self talk.” Repent as soon as you catch yourself thinking angry, sinful thoughts. Replace them with biblical thinking.
8. Be aware of other sins which often accompany and feed anger (pride, bitterness, slander, gossip, evil intent, murder, sexual sin, other deeds of the flesh)
9. Make sure you seek forgiveness from all whom you have been angry with.

J. Establish anger-counteracting, righteousness-promoting _____:

1. Focus on God’s provision and plan in the midst of difficult circumstances or challenging people (Gen. 50:20, Rom. 8:28-29, James 1:2-4).
2. Remember God’s role when injustice occurs (Rom. 12:19, Gen. 50:19)
3. Learn to return _____ for evil. Practice loving your enemies. Overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21, Gen. 50:21, Matt. 5:44).
4. Practice _____ and learn to be content in all circumstances (Phil. 4:6-7, 11).

K. Resources

1. Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger* (P&R, 2005)*
2. Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger* (Calvary, 1997)
3. Robert Jones, *Angry at God?* (P&R, 2003)

4. David Powlison, *Anger* (P&R, 2000)
5. Stuart Scott, *Communication & Conflict Resolution* (Focus, 2005)
6. Stuart Scott, *Anger, Anxiety & Fear* (Focus, 2009)*
7. Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker* (Baker, 2004)