

The number one enemy of love (Unresolved Anger)

Introduction

Babies enter the world with memory banks waiting to be filled. In order to survive and thrive in their growing lives they need instruction and training on a wide variety of subjects, such as eating, speaking, personal hygiene, dress, manners, education, respecting others, etc., etc. Although we teach our children these things, we don't teach them everything that is 'essential-must-know' before they leave the family nest.

I loved my parents very much and appreciated the many things they taught me while living at home. However, there was a lot they didn't teach me... such as sex and sexuality, marriage, managing worry, parenting, death and dying, etc. Ignorance in these areas has not been a help to me in my life... in particular, anger.

Friends, the 'number one' enemy of love is unresolved anger. Biblical teaching from my parents on this subject would have saved me from hurting many others and myself.

From the very moment sin entered human life in the Garden of Eden, to this day, unresolved anger has senselessly damaged and destroyed relationships and lives; in the home, marriage, work place, church, and with God.

This message addresses five questions:

1. **What** is anger?
2. **Why** did God design us to experience anger?
3. **What** is unrighteous anger?
4. **What** are the pitfalls of unrighteous anger? and,
5. **How** can we resolve/safeguard ourselves from our unrighteous anger?

There are hundreds of references to anger in the Bible, but the reference this message investigates is Ephesians 4:26-27.

Writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul instructed believers to 'put-off' worldly conduct and 'put-on' new conduct... the conduct of Christ. Giving six examples to the Ephesians, Paul said: 1. Don't lie ... tell the truth (4:25), **2. No to unrighteous anger ... yes to righteous anger** (vv. 26-27), 3. Don't steal ... work and give (v. 28), 4. Don't use your mouth for evil ... but good (vv. 29-30), 5. Don't be unkind or bitter ... be kind and loving (4:31-5:2) and, 6. No to immorality and impurity (5:3-4).

This message focuses on 'No' to Unrighteous anger... 'Yes' to righteous anger.

1. WHAT is anger?

In his book, entitled, "Making Love Last Forever," Gary Smalley says, "*Anger is an emotion. Like all of our emotions, there's nothing wrong with it in and of itself. Anger is our human response to something that occurs, or at least to our perception of that occurrence.*"

Friends, while 'anger' is a natural, God designed human emotion, it can be used in two ways... *righteous* and *unrighteous*... *helpful* and *harmful*.

2. WHY did God design us to experience anger?

- Firstly, **God gets angry**: The Bible tells us that God hates evil and His anger burns against those who practice it. (Ex. 32:9-10)
- Secondly, **believers are to get angry**: As we have been made in the image of God, we have been designed as His instruments on earth to take appropriate action against all forms of evil directed against Him and others. **God's anger in us is to control evil on earth!**

For example:

- In Mark 3:5, we can see Jesus expressing righteous anger against the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees who resented His healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. **Righteous anger defending mankind!**
- In Matthew 21:12, although the word anger is not used, there's no doubt that righteous anger was present when Jesus drove out the money changers--out of God's Temple (temple of prayer). **Righteous anger defending God!**

NOTE: Jesus was always angered when His heavenly Father was maligned or when others were mistreated, but He was never angry at what was done to Him.

Anger that is un-selfish... based on love for God and concern for others is not only permissible, but it is commanded!

- It is the duty of every believer to "be angry" whenever sin and evil is encountered.
- Genuine love cannot help being angered at that which injures the object of that love.

Simply stated: 'Righteous anger' is a Godly emotion, designed to unselfishly move us to act appropriately against evil.

3. **WHAT** is unrighteous anger?

There is a dividing line between *righteous* anger and *unrighteous* anger—it's an invisible 'fine line'. We cross this fine line whenever our anger serves Satan, instead of God.

This happens whenever we are...

- **self-defensive** and **self-serving**...
- **resentful** and **vindictive**.

The Bible tells us that at the heart of all evil is 'self'.

Smalley says in his book that *“found woven in all acts of unrighteous anger is the common thread of unfulfilled expectations.”* He also says that *“fear, frustration and hurt (or a combination) results whenever our expectations are un-fulfilled (when we don’t get what we want or expect).”* Unrighteous anger is self-driven anger that serves Satan!

4. WHAT are the pitfalls of unrighteous anger?

Anger should never be allowed to ‘board’ in our lives as a ‘heart-guest’. This not only harms us, but also others around us.

Smalley says, *“Think of anger as a sticky, bad-smelling, dangerous substance that can be compressed and stuffed into something like a spray can (different people / different size cans). Angry people tend to go around spraying their built-up anger on others.*

The spray is felt by others as meanness, insensitivity, negativity, and general offensiveness, and the ‘sprayers’ may not even realise how they’re behaving or how it is affecting other people.

They just keep spraying in every direction everywhere they go, like skunks that constantly feel threatened. Their ‘anger spray’ stings like an acid that burns.”

After asking the question, “How do we respond when we get sprayed by someone else’s anger,” Smalley says, *“Too often, without even thinking about it, we make the unhealthy choice of letting ourselves marinate in the angry person’s spray--then we, too, begin to emit the foul odour. After a while, it starts seeping inside us and filling our ‘anger can’. When this happens in families, anger is passed down from generation to generation, wreaking **intergenerational** havoc.”*

He further adds, *“Sometimes a debilitating anger starts in childhood, perhaps with some sort of abuse.”*

Our final question is ...

5. HOW can we resolve/safeguard ourselves from our unrighteous anger?

In our text, Paul lists three simple instructions...

- I. **“Do not sin”** - Our anger must be free from injured pride, spite, malice, animosity, and revenge.
- II. **“Do not let the sun go down on your anger”** warns us against nursing our anger (It must be dealt with today!)
- III. **“Give no opportunity to the devil”** warns of Satan tempting us to cross the ‘fine line’ of self-satisfaction.

Gary Smalley suggests seven ways in which to unload unresolved anger.

1. Define the offence;
2. Allow yourself to grieve;
3. Try to understand your offender;

4. Release your offender;
- 5 Look for pearls in the offence;
6. Put your feelings in writing, and
7. “Reach Out” in love to your offender with forgiveness.

Some years ago I crossed the ‘fine line’ into the territory of unrighteous anger against one of my own family members.

Within the space of 12 hours I had adopted all of Gary Smalley’s “Seven Ways To Unload Unresolved Anger” and experienced the full release of unrighteous anger from my life... making it possible for me to once again love others and be loved by others, with the love of God.

William Joukhadar
21 June 2023