

Provoking to Anger

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[Psalm 106:33](#) Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

I. The number of times the Bible refers to the children of Israel, and others, provoking God to anger is hard to count.

A. The Scribes and Pharisees provoked Jesus to anger.

[Mark 3:5](#) And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, **Stretch forth thine hand**. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

B. The children of Israel provoked Moses to anger.

[Psalm 106:32-33](#) They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

C. We are charged about provoking our children to anger:

[Colossians 3:21](#) Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.

1. This happens the same way that God, Jesus, and Moses were provoked.

II. What are the things that provoke others to anger?

A. In the case of Jesus it was the hardness of their hearts. (Mark 3:5 above)

1. Stubbornness; lack of compassion; lack of feeling; and hypocrisy.

2. So arrogantly sure they were right and He was wrong, while they were actually so lost and blind they didn't know God even though He was standing right before them.

B. In the case of Moses it was their unbelief, their ungratefulness, their cowardice, their fear, their selfish concerns, their rebellion, and their falsely accusing him, and blaming him for their troubles.

C. In the case of God, they provoked him to anger with their wickedness.

1. They provoked him to jealousy with their spiritual adulatory.

2. They provoked him to anger with their unbelief and rebellion.

III. So here is a question for us to consider: "Do we provoke others to anger?"

A. We need to take a good honest look at ourselves and search out our hearts and our words and attitudes and interactions with others and see if we do any of these things that provoked God, Jesus, and Moses to anger.

B. There are so many ways in which we can provoke one another that we can't possibly cover them all.

1. By trying to impose our will or our opinion on others.

2. By criticizing others and finding fault.

3. By talking about others and their faults to others or slandering them for some real or imagined deed or trait.

C. To provoke means "to call into action; to arouse; to excite; To make angry; to offend; to incense; to enrage."

1. If you keep prodding and poking and yanking at someone they will eventually turn on you and give you some of your own medicine.

- D. The things about us that provoke others to anger are the things we have the hardest time seeing in ourselves.
 - 1. Hardness of heart is especially hard to see in ourselves because it is that absolute certainty that we are right and have all the facts that we need to know in order to pass judgement on other people.
 - 2. Our selfishness and pride are also nearly impossible for us to see and acknowledge about ourselves, because we are so determined about justifying ourselves in everything.
 - 3. Our hypocrisy is hard for us to recognize in ourselves because we are blind to it, but other people can spot it very clearly.
 - E. But if we simply become thoroughly honest with ourselves we can make some improvements and correct some of the things that offend others and provoke them to anger.
 - F. It is a sin on our part when we provoke others to anger needlessly because it may go ill with them because of it, as it did with Moses.
 - 1. So we will give account to God for the damage caused by our provoking others.
- IV. This is a spiritual matter because the verse says that they “provoked his spirit.”
- A. Anger is more than a passion of the heart – it involves the spirit.
 - B. Anger takes control of the entire person when it is provoked and it is hard to get back in its cage when it is loosed.
 - 1. It takes control like liquor does, and it takes time for it to wear off, also.
 - C. This is why it causes great damage and is not something to be provoked or turned loose.
 - D. Therefore, the person who provokes to anger shares in the guilt of bad consequences.
- V. The other side of the coin is that a child of God is not easily provoked.

1 Corinthians 13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Ecclesiastes 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

- A. A true Christian can make no excuse for a short tempter or for being easily offended.

Psalm 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

- B. A true Christian that has matured even a little should have enough patience to endure the prodding, the arrogance, the offenses of other people, no matter who they are – this is a Christian virtue.

Luke 21:19 In your patience possess ye your souls. (spirit)

- C. The word is used in a positive sense in the Bible, also:

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

- 1. This can only mean by example, and by encouraging words that call into action, arouse, or encite.

Galatians 5:25-26 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.