

**TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH  
THE STRAIGHT SCOOP ON ANGER  
EPHESIANS 4:26-32**

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**I read a news article recently about some of the 39,000 lawsuits that incarcerated convicts filed against the prison system. They claimed cruel and unusual punishment because they were served chunky peanut butter instead of smooth; that some mail deliveries were scheduled while they were napping and that they were being forced to listen to country music. I don't know about you, but this makes me so angry that they are allowed to get away with this! After all, they are convicted felons!**

**And consider all of the recent shootings at schools and at the workplace. These are acts of rage, getting even with the system or people for what they perceive they have done to them.**

**It is no wonder that some social commentators refer to today's era as the age of rage. Quite possibly this is the most prevalent of the seven deadly sins.**

**Then I read an interview in *U.S. News & World Report* with this 102-year-old artist who had painted alongside Claude Monet. She described the spiritual side of her life: "My spiritual vision means everything to me. I am against all war. It doesn't solve anything. I have this great interest in the world and in people." then she added, "and it annoys me so that as I sit here, a little old lady, I, who does not believe in violence, would like to have cannons shooting all the people I don't approve of."**

**How about you? Are there people in your life that you think deserve to be shot?**

**People that makes you so furious that, at the moment, you literally don't care what misfortune befalls them? In fact, you want to see them suffer and suffer beyond their greatest fears.**

**If you do, guess what — you are human! And as long as we are alive and breathing, we will get angry at others and perhaps even ourselves.**

**In my former life, my lack of patience often got me into trouble. So when I came to know the Lord, I prayed for him to help me learn patience. For the most part, he answered my prayer, but I still struggle with "bad drivers" and "slow golfers."**

**For me, I get most angry at drivers who drive without consideration for others on the road and for golfers who spend more time talking with each other rather than going and hitting their ball and talking while driving to their next shot.**

**How about you? What makes you most angry? What situations do you struggle with? Think about that for a moment!**

**But what is it that provokes this kind of anger? Anger management professionals tell us that the common causes of anger are and have always been:**

**Frustration and stress**

**Being overtired**

**Keeping feelings bottled up inside**

**Feeling misunderstood or ignored and probably the most significant cause of anger — — not having our expectations met!**

**Let's go back to last Sunday, nearly 2000 years ago. Jesus triumphantly marched into Jerusalem amidst the praises of the Jews because they anticipated that he was going to save them from the rule of the Roman Empire. But when Jesus offered spiritual salvation and not physical salvation, they turned on Him. Why, because He did not meet their expectations.**

**They became angry and outraged and eventually screamed out, "crucify him". And they did! They put Jesus on the cross of Calvary instead of Barabbas, the intended victim. Perhaps were it not for their rage, we would not be celebrating the events of this passion week.**

**What about us? Do we not get angered when our service expectations at restaurants and stores are not being met? Do we not get angered at our spouses and others when they do not do what we expect of them? Yes, we do! Why? Because we human and sometimes lose control of our emotions!**

**But we must realize that the consequences of uncontrolled anger can be devastating to personal relationships and physical well-being. Poor anger management is a key factor in domestic violence, child abuse, relationship problems, behavior problems, workplace violence, substance abuse, school and workplace violence and delinquency, and criminal behavior. Anger can actually cause or worsen health problems, including high blood pressure and depression.**

**According to several double blind studies, some over a 25 year period, high levels of hostility were directly correlated to fatal heart attacks, strokes, and cancer.**

**The apostle Paul recognized the significance and magnitude of this problem and dealt with it in his epistle to the Ephesians. Please open your bibles to Ephesians chapter 4 and verses 26-32, our text for today.**

**Reading from the NIV, Paul says:**

**"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the holy spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."**

**Maybe anger doesn't seem like such a severe moral transgression to you, but the bible makes clear why it's such a serious offense. Paul offers us six truths in these verses, telling us how we are to deal with our anger!**

**He begins with verse 26 saying, "in your anger, do not sin."**

**Anger in and of itself is not necessarily a sin. The bible tells us that even God gets angry. "But watch out," says Paul. You'd better find out what lies behind your anger before it leads to something else.**

**Proverbs 29:22 tells us that, "An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins." And Psalm 4:4 says, "In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent."**

**My car has this little warning light that lights up whenever I get down to below a quarter of a tank of gas. Sometimes that little light really bugs me. It has a habit of coming on when I'm in the middle of nowhere, just after I've passed the gas station on the interstate and the next exit's fifty miles away. So what would you think if I told you I'm going to take my car to the dealer and have them remove that little light? You would say that's ridiculous. My problem is not the little red light. My problem is the empty gas tank.**

**For many of us, our problem is not anger. Our problem is what lies behind the anger. Some psychologists refer to anger as a secondary emotion; it's often brought on by something else.**

**First, there's hurt. It may be physical pain or emotional suffering. It may be relational conflict, like when you feel rejected by somebody else. And if we'll look closely, we will detect a fair amount of pride behind a lot of our anger. We just can't believe what's happening to us. We deserve so much better, don't we?**

**The second root cause behind anger is frustration. Things aren't going my way. My schedule is tyrannizing me, or the shopping checkout line hasn't moved in five minutes, or my kids never do what I tell them to do. I feel helpless, frustrated, and angry.**

**And fear can trigger anger. Do you remember when Jesus and his disciples got caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee? What was Jesus doing? Sleeping. Mark 4:38 tells us that Jesus' disciples woke him up with angry voices demanding, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"**

**How does Jesus deal with their anger? Does he ask "why are you so angry?" No. He asks, "Why are you so afraid?"**

**We're grumpy as we're paying the bills. Why? Because we're fearful we may not have enough to make ends meet. We ream out our teenage son because he gets the car home fifteen minutes late. We're fearful he was in an accident. We resent our bosses, because we're worried that his or her arbitrary decision could eliminate our jobs. Fear!**

**When you're angry, ask the question: what's the real issue here? Because whatever is behind the anger is what you need to deal with, with God's help, of course.**

**Then Verse 26 instructs us: "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."**

**Even though neither of us were Christians then, Sherry and I both believed that we shouldn't go to bed angry and that we needed to resolve our disputes first. My friends, I cannot tell you how many times in our early marriage, that we stayed awake nearly all night before coming to some type of settlement. Some were win-win and some were compromise and others were simply a mutual agreement to disagree — however the outcome, it was resolved — that was until the next time.**

**Not getting very much sleep made the next few days really tough, too!**

**We were really on edge with each other and probably just waiting for another opportunity to put each other down in one way or another. Obviously it would have been far better to resolve the issue before it became an all-nighter!**

**It is vital to realize that when we go to bed angry, we wake up even angrier because our anger has become a settled disposition and we are just waiting for the chance to show just how angry we are!**

**You're watching a football game, your favorite team. It's a close game. In the final minutes, the officials make a lousy call, and your team loses. You're angry!**

**To make matters worse, they replay it ten times from five different angles. And every time you see it replayed, the hair raises on the back of your neck.**

**You get angrier. In the post-game show, what clip do they show? — That bad call. You turn on the ten o'clock news. What do they replay? — That bad call. Then *Sports Illustrated* comes in the mailbox and guess what? The cover shows a photo of this same lousy call.**

**This is exactly what our mind does with a situation that's caused anger. If we fall asleep thinking about it, you can bet we'll still be thinking about it in the shower the next morning.**

**If this sort of behavior persists in our lives, we become angry people. It's not just that we get angry; we are angry. Anger becomes a characteristic attitude. Do you ever find yourself to be a walking time bomb just looking for a place to explode?**

**Maybe that's the mood you came home with. Maybe your angry disposition isn't turned out on others; maybe it's turned inward. Dr. Paul Meier, a psychiatrist and bestselling author, says that "Anger is probably responsible for 95 percent of psychological depressions."**

**Remember Jonah? God asked Jonah to preach his message to the wicked people of Nineveh, and Jonah initially refused. God got his attention in the deep, blue sea. So Jonah eventually went to Nineveh, the people repented and turned to God. And everybody was happy — except Jonah.**

**The scripture tells us that Jonah didn't like the Ninevites, so he was angry with God for not nuking them.**

**Jonah's anger became a settled disposition. Jonah became a pouting prophet. The Old Testament story concludes with Jonah asking God to let him die. Now that's depression. That is anger turned inward.**

**Don't sleep with anger. Don't linger with unresolved issues in your life. Don't let it become a disposition.**

**Then, in Verse 27 Paul says: "And do not give the devil a foothold."**

**Anger in and of itself may not be sinful, but it gives the devil a foothold in the door of our lives. When that door is cracked open, there's no telling what will follow the anger in.**

**Do you remember the first story of anger in the bible? It's the story of two brothers, Cain and Abel. They both brought sacrifices, gifts to God. God accepted Abel's; but He rejected Cain's. God rejected the offering because of Cain's attitude. In my mind, I can hear him saying, "Cain, if you'll change your attitude, I'll accept your gift." but then God added this warning: "Cain, right now anger is crouching at your door." Cain opened that door, and when anger came into Cain's life, what followed? Cain murdered his brother Abel. His attitude and anger allowed Satan to gain a foothold in his life.**

**Richard Walters, a Psychiatrist, writes: "People will be murdered today because of someone's anger. Others will die from physical ailments resulting from or aggravated by their angry feelings. Many people die in anger-related auto accidents, while others carry out the angriest act of all — suicide. Countless relationships die little by little as resentment gnaws away at the foundations of love and trust. Anger is a devastating force, and its consequences should sicken us."**

**This Psychiatrist closes with these words: "Anger related destruction of the human life and spirit is the incredible national disaster. It's a personal tragedy in the lives of millions."**

**The wisdom of the ancient's addressed these issues, too!**

**Proverbs 14:17 says, "An angry person does foolish things." A few chapters later Proverbs 29:22 says, "A hot tempered man commits many sins."**

**Then Paul continues in Verse 29 saying: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."**

**Unwholesome talk can be used like a weapon in the life of an angry person.**

**Proverbs 12:18 says -"There is one who speaks rashly like the thrust of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."**

**In fact, there are about 100 proverbs that deal with our tongue.**

Here are just ten of them:

**10:11-"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life; but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence."**

**11:9-"With his mouth, the Godless man destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous will be delivered."**

**12:19-"Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment."**

**12:22-"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal faithfully are his delight."**

**13:3-"The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin."**

**15:1-"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."**

**15:28-"The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things."**

**18:21-"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."**

**21:23- "He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from trouble."**

And my favorite:

**17:28-"Even a fool is considered wise when he keeps silent!"**

**Said my way, "It is better to keep your mouth shut and be thought ignorant, than to open your mouth and prove it!"**

**And I must admit, I have been thought ignorant by lots and lots of people in my life time!**

**We underestimate the destructive capability of angry words. It's critical that we begin to guard our words carefully. A well-controlled mouth can neutralize anger.**

**Reiterating Proverbs 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Our words either cool down or steam up an angry situation. Do you choose and use your words wisely?**

**Then Verse 30 says: "And do not grieve the holy spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."**

**Let's imagine that you want to become a great tennis player. You hire a professional coach. Every day he works with you and your whole game gets better. Now you're ready for some competition. You take your place on the court while your coach beams his support from the sidelines.**

**Early in the match, a close call goes against you, and you get angry. Now that you're angry, you start forgetting everything your coach has drilled into you. Your play goes from bad to worse, and you eventually lose the match.**

**Afterwards, you apologize to the coach and he forgives you. It's back to practicing for the next match. But the next match is a repeat of the first contest. You lose your temper and forget everything your coach has taught you. If this sort of behavior happens again and again, how long do you think you'll keep your coach?**

**The bible describes God's spirit as a sort of resident coach in our lives.**

**When we humble ourselves before God, acknowledging our sin and our need for a savior, the Holy Spirit comes to reside in our hearts. His main mission is to dramatically "improve our game," to play like Jesus.**

**Unfortunately, every time we get angry we forget everything he's taught us. Our anger causes us to turn a deaf ear to his counsel.**

**The Holy Spirit speaks to us through God's Word. This is his coaching manual. But when anger begins to control our lives, we stop listening.**

**Oh how it distances him from our lives. And this is one friend we can't afford to alienate.**

**My friends, most of what we learned about anger today has come in the form of negative warnings. Don't do this; don't do that. But the Apostle Paul is going to send us out on a positive note. He tells us in these last two verses that we can overcome anger — by making the right choices!**

**I know that some of us have been taught from childhood that the way to deal with anger is to suppress it. Act unruffled even if you're raging inside. Trying to suppress anger is almost as impossible as trying to hold a beach ball under the water. It keeps popping back up.**



**At the other extreme, some therapists are telling us to express our anger. Scream if it helps to ventilate your feelings. But expressing anger only intensifies it. We get angrier.**

**Suppress it? No. Express it? No. The only way to deal with it is to replace it — replace it with something far better — Christ like qualities.**

**So in Verse 31 Paul says: "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."**

**But some people say anger is far too complex to be addressed so simply. I believe that anyone who lives a life of anger is choosing to do so. Yes, my brothers and sisters, it's a choice — it's your choice!**

**Paul says, "Don't choose it. Get rid of anger." What do you replace it with? Look at Verse 32. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you."**

**Paul tells us in his closing verse that if we've experienced the forgiveness of God, if we've humbled ourselves before Him, it's almost impossible to be angry with others. I don't think I've ever known a truly humble person who had a problem with anger.**

**Let me wrap up with this: Paul is saying that we need to surrender ourselves to Jesus every day; asking Him to give us the strength and power to choose to rid ourselves of anger —and He will! Remember what Jesus said in his sermon on the mount — "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."**

**And all God's children say — Amen!**