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Are you Angry?

If you would answer 'yes' to this question, you have struck normalcy. If this question angers you, you are again displaying not any abnormal reaction. We need to look much deeper beyond our behaviour and words. I encourage this difficult exercise because our inner self ultimately counts and not our external activities many a times in God's style of evaluation. Shall we walk this personal exercise and learn that this unpredictable trait is not a sin by itself but it could lead to sin if not handled in the proper way?

It is important that we understand anger and its causes. Oftentimes when we get angry over a triggering situation, we take all possible efforts to not be angry over the situation but in vain because we are only trying to ignore the presence of this strong emotion when it's already there. When we confront an angry person on anger he would always refuse to admit it. It has to be understood that it's OK and acceptable to be angry over undesirable happenings. But the sting activates when this emotional instability makes us forget the basic facts

about God like the Israelites did in Numbers 14:1-4. They lost sight of the right perspective. The consideration of the larger perspective in the midst of an emotional turmoil is made lame.

The sources or the causes of anger can be as unpredictable as they can be. There lies the pothole. A pothole has no face and hence makes no appearances for people to stay away from it or to walk around or across it. Anger is such a one without a face. It is largely deceiving and comes from nowhere. Can this anger be put under our feet? Oh, yes, it can be. The first step we lift towards the stamping of it begins with locating it. Where does it come from?

Christian Psychologists say that it begins with conception when during the gestation period the foetus is exposed to the stress from the family environment. Aggression begins as early. When Rebekah was pregnant with Jacob and Esau she enquired of the Lord as to why the twins jostled against each other in the womb. The Lord answered then that they were two nations which will be separated, one will be stronger than the other and the younger one will serve the older (Gen 25:22,23). The conflict had already begun. Here is a strong message to parents who are expecting a baby. Place your hands upon the stomach of the mother daily, spending a few minutes praying for the growing embryo which is not a thing but is a live being preparing to emerge into a bigger room. Talk to your baby with words of welcome and expressions of love and eager expectation of its arrival. It would make a world of difference. John the Baptist was jumping with the joy of the Holy Spirit when he was still in his mother's womb. Curses and anxiety over the

sex of the baby at the time of conception can have disastrous personality damages on the emotional growth of the child. Anger and aggression are one of those. I have counselled adults with the problem of anger whose sources, when traced, lead upto conception. Would you consider this seriously and with reverence, young parents? Ministering to our children begins here. It's a herculian task to counsel and therapeutise an adult with this problem, hence the plea. It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

Unmet needs cause anger. When a child cries for a toy or for attention and does not get its wants met, the anger is expressed in a temper tantrum. The child lies on the ground, kicks its legs and demands its want. This should be strongly discouraged either through a spank or through marked ignorance or a clearly spelt out 'No.' If not it grows into a manipulative anger through into adulthood. Basic needs of a child — enough attention, love, acceptance, security and food — should be met. Unconditionality counts. Favouritism, rejection or neglect, teasing, labelling and provoking are major causes of anger in a child's world (Eph 6:4). They leave raw scars on the adult's personality.

Loneliness causes anger which is deep and silent. It erodes with absolutely no sign of rust or damage. It suddenly breaks out into an active or passive depression when it takes the neighbours by surprise. Loneliness is painful and powerful enough to kill a person. It need not necessarily mean a withdrawn behaviour but we all have faced times when we can be lonely in a noisy, jubilant crowd, when people look through us (1 Ki 19).

Loneliness, is a problem not easily admitted. But it cannot be masked for a long time. It shows when we least

expect it in angry ways. It erupts with a demand for respect, a demand for acceptance, a demand for love, a demand for justice and for recognition. These can be termed as basic desires of every creation. But when these desires turn into demands there grows the problem. There are two sides to dealing with this issue of loneliness. Let's look around us and when we do, we surprisingly find that all of us would be lonely at sometime or the other. Giving a smile to anyone may be just not the people in the neighbourhood but even at those within the doors of our own home. Smiling meaningfully communicates just love in its simple sense to ones in our home. It can be the most difficult and may even seem plastic but it can strengthen relationships. It has to begin at home. Smiling at someone in the street is very alien to our culture but when done it can grow into a beautiful relationship paving a way to minister to the lonely, through friendships.

It should be remembered that in dealing with loneliness, the initiative always has to be ours, with no expectation of a receiving of the extended smile. Our smile can be ignored, frowned upon or rejected. Expect these responses to avoid disappointment.

When loneliness is not dealt with it expresses in the form of an inferiority complex, suppressed and repressed anger and suicide. The employing of this simple method of smiling at ourselves and at others can relax us, thus decreasing the intensity of anger towards us, God and others.

Grandpa Cain reminds us that **guilt** can cause very deep and destructive anger. His anger and jealousy that occurred during a worship service, not dealt with in the

Bible way, got itself expressed in the form of murder which left him with a deep sense of guilt which again made him angry towards God and himself. When we feel the wrong feelings, instead of correcting them, we try to deal with it when it's still bleeding. God did not warn Cain because he got angry, but because he stayed angry. His anger was provoked during a worship service. It was misplaced anger. This only leaves us in a more complicated trap of guilt and anger if we get caught up in this vicious circle of sin-guilt-anger, leading to sin (Gen 4).

There can be nothing as wise as refraining from acting upon anything when our emotions are high and raw. Working at the situation when we are angry can only result in a disastrous turn or broken relationships. Solomon has talked about the wise man who keeps himself under control (Prov 29:11). We have to exercise our will and choose to stay still till things are calm. And remember that still waters give a better picture of the bottom. This can give a clear picture of the situation and the dealing of the issue can begin with more clarity and light (Prov 15:1; 20:2).

Anger is at its heights when we **lose control** over any situation over which we desire to hold control. A possessive natured person can suffer anger. This type of person loves to possess all things and all people around him/her and will have a rival who has similar desires. The conflict between these two people results in anger. Another side of losing control is insecurity. People who are insecure find their security in controlling the happenings, people and activities around them. The moment they realise that there are things happening without their knowledge, they get insecure, with the resultant emotion of anger.

Possessiveness and insecurity are not traits that God desires for us. We could ourselves allow or ask a friend if they find this trait in us. If they do, let's work at it. It's as simple as learning to relax in the wisdom of God's sovereignty over all situations. This trait could result in a nervous breakdown. So, let's do it TODAY!

Another example of anger due to loss of control is loss — of a person, thing, reputation, etc. The death of a person can cause anger along with grief towards the dead person, God and sometimes towards ourselves. Jonah was angry with God because his reputation was damaged. It drove him to contemplating suicide. The loss of a thing or reputation could possibly be controlled partially by us by the carefulness of its usage. Our responsibility is to work at things that are within our control and relax and rejoice in the knowledge that God is in control of the things that are beyond our control. Discerning those within our control and beyond is the key to handling anger in this context (Jonah 4).

Disappointments and failures are causes of anger focussed more onto the self and onto the ones who have earned or won success. Peter's failure had begun the moment he insisted that He would never fail (Lk 22). Anger towards self is manifested in the form of self-hate when we fail to attain desirable goals. Our minds are set towards desires and accomplishments which sometimes don't fall into the perfect plan of God for our lives. Failing to understand and accept this simple concept, we strive towards the goals over and over again and keep hitting at disappointments and failures and this ends up with us questioning our potentials. We need to work hard at exercising our potentials with the confirmation of the goals

which we believe would have God's approval. Fighting and striving towards our selfish desires and failing causes resentment and bitter anger towards ourselves and God. To handle this we unconsciously begin blameshifting or slip into self-condemnation, causing deeper anger.

Betrayal and broken confidentiality are major sources though they seem minor at the surface. The breach of trust is the painful wound caused here. The immediate reaction to this sting is to fumingly lash out at the person whom we suspect to have betrayed us. It would be surprising, if we could analyse our assumptions and little further, only to find out that the betrayer was someone we least expected. We learn some difficult lessons here. We have to accept that everyone has their own freedom to use heard information in whatever way they desire. We should have been cautious in choosing trustworthy people to trust them with delicate and confidential information and accept responsibility for a wreckage caused instead of burning against someone else, which takes us nowhere. Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines (Judg 16). Absalom betrayed his dad, David (2 Sam 15). Jehu betrayed Joram and killed him (2 Kin 9). Judas betrayed Jesus (Mt 26). The betrayed were shaken. Some responded in anger. Some with forgiveness. How are you going to respond to your betrayer?

Conflicts with our family, friends and coworkers cause anger in many facets. One of the major causes of conflicts between people is the intolerance and not being appreciative of the differences we find in each other. Not one of us resemble any of us. We are all made unique which literally means the word to the core. The way we think, perceive, see, understand, do and receive things

are strangely different. Differences should never be interpreted as abnormalities. A failure to appreciate differences is a failure to love, accept and appreciate God's handwork. What is our attitude towards people who are different to us in various ways? Accepting and appreciating differences is not humanly easy when we want things done our way. When we take a special effort and change our attitude to grow out of our critical attitude towards differences, we would be taken by surprise to see the joy of varieties which we have missed because of our legalism, conservatism and rigidity. We need to look beyond our own self-drawn horizons. Differences give colour to our world. Every time I counsel our cross cultural missionaries, I make it a point to emphasise to them how important a role they play in adding flavour and colour to the missionary world. Can we imagine the sad plight of a rainbow if God had given it just a black and a white. The seven colours speak and marvel. So do we! We all portray various colours. We just have to learn to see them as colours and not as a smudge. All the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ were belonging to twelve different personality types. Flexibility adds colour while rigidity breaks. Would it be too much on our part to start appreciating the differences in others recognising the uniqueness of God's creation and to grow out of our critical attitude towards differences? The Abraham-Joseph family tree was blessed but at the same time dysfunctional (Gen 25). Impulsivity, deceit, favouritism, divided loyalties, competition, greed, envy are some skeletons in Abraham's family closet.

Perfectionism and Workaholism belong to the world of anger. Perfectionism is a trait which holds an obsession

of needing to have everything done perfectly well. It cannot tolerate mistakes. Paul here teaches on a quality of love which says that love is patient, tolerant and keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor 13). Paul was imperfectly perfect. His right pedigree, right training, right desires, right enthusiasm were not enough. They counted for nothing before the Salvation of God (Acts 22:3,4; Phil 3:4-7). There is not one perfect person on the face of the earth. People with perfectionism bug anger at people who are learners and they are usually not good teachers. We the church are called to be encouragers, teachers and helpers. Unless the insecticide of patience, love and acceptance is sprayed heavily upon the bug, it could lay eggs and cause a plague. Perfectionism can be justified as to the desire to become more Christlike but the humaneness cannot be discounted. Many a time this can leave us with guilt and anger on ourselves too. When we are not successful in being perfect, our aim is towards perfection. We only need to be warned against the obsession. History speaks of perfectionists who have had strong suicidal tendencies. We need to accept the reality that human beings do fail, fall and flow out with victory.

Workaholism is another obsession with a major resultant emotion—anger. It's an obsession with the task at hand, deadlines and successes. This task-oriented kind of personality type gives very little importance to relationships. What matters most to such people is the work and not the workers. Such people find it hard to express appreciation on achievement because they are never satisfied with achievements. The desire to work grows stronger while their relationship with God and others lose importance. Any obstruction to the completion of the task could anger the workaholic. Beware! Ministry

could become the task while we fail in the basics of relationships with God and people which lies at the centre of God's Kingdom principles. Family comes last in the priority list of a workaholic and angers the members, and he is angered at the behaviour of his children and does not realise that he was never there to teach his children godly behaviour. Respect God-given limits and avoid burnout (Isa 40:31). Those outside a situation can bring valuable perspective than those who are tangled in a situation, like Jethro who suggested delegation to Moses who was overloaded (Ex 18).

“Please pray for me, pastor. My wife makes me very angry,” is a well-said but wrongly-spelt plea for prayer. Prayer is vital but working hard at change is equally vital. Prayer and hard work go hand in hand. To begin dealing with the problem of anger, we must first learn to **accept responsibility** for our anger. The truth is that no one can make us feel anything. It's our response or reaction to people's behaviour towards us. Let's stop blaming anyone for the way we feel. When we get angry, we need to change our vocabulary by accepting responsibility and by admitting, “I am angry.” Try it and see how humbling the experience can be. Change begins here.

The word ‘forgetting’ the one who angered us and all that happened is nowhere close to practicality. When anger is not dealt with, it is suppressed and being buried alive like a volcano. It erupts when no one expects causing more damage. Anger can also get repressed when not expressed in the healthy way and dealt with. To exercise expression in its simple sense, we just need to spend a day or two calming ourselves down till we can see through the heart of the situation clearly and pray over the

situation. Avoid immediate ventilation. Review the source of your anger.

Take next the initiative, a big step towards humility (Mt 5:23,24,25) and go to the person who might have angered you. **Share and express** your anger to the person concerned with words of respect and concern. Accept your role of damage caused and **apologise**. Mutual sharing gives a better understanding of the conflict. Don't expect a hug from the other side embracing your apology. It may not be that easy. It's a process and you perhaps may have to extend more grace and time for the other person to come to that place of reconciliation and admittal. **Forgive** the one who angered you and express it verbally. Forgiveness means all the effort taken after the reconciliation to rebuild the relationship. Forgive yourself if you realise that you have been the cause. **Don't react** to provocation. **Stay calm** while you allow the other person to express his feelings. **Where and how** you reconcile would speak on the fruits of reconciliation. Be on the look out for confrontations and corrections and respond positively.

Why do we have to talk so much about this imp called anger? Only because it can start mastering you when we are not equipped enough to master our feelings. Anger can be destructive in its literal sense. Undealt anger can cause psychosomatic illnesses which means a psychological disorder being manifested in the physical. These illnesses can be in the forms of skin eruptions, acidity, heart problems, nervous breakdowns, headaches, depression and in many other forms.

Let's strike a serious note on this trait and work at it. Confronting the problem of anger and handling anger do not lie in the list of impossibilities. We can work at it together with the Lord Jesus who has handled anger ever so constructively and set us a model. Shall we shout a halt towards cherishing analysing the private lives of others and sit as ease and allow God's searchlight right through us?

Are you angry still?

It is well with my soul!

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul!*

*It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well, with my soul*

*Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul*

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul*

— Horatio Spafford, 1828-1888

(B)
**Attitude
Formation**

