

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Is anger a problem in the world today? It may be our biggest problem. It is everywhere. You see it in department stores when women want to return something. You see it in do-it-yourself stores where men get angry because something does not go the way they think it should go or they do not get handled the way they think they should be handled. A return will not be taken the way it should be taken. You see it in children's ballgames. For those of you watching around the world, do you see a lot of anger and where do you see it? What is the cause of it? Do you think people know how to handle their anger? I do not think so. I think there is a stress and anger in the world today that is worse than it has ever been. It is so prevalent in every aspect of society. In America, if you go to a child's baseball, soccer or football game, you can see parents out there screaming at their children at the top of their lungs and screaming at the coach. You can see coaches screaming at little 6 or 7-year-old children. What is going on? It is out of control. Why is it happening?

(Look at these pictures. Here is an angry man in a marriage.) There is more of that going on than people know.

What does God say is going on? Why is everyone so angry? Look at this first Scripture in Daniel 7:25, out of the Amplified Bible. It is talking about Satan, "And he shall speak words against the most-high God and shall wear out the saints of the most high." We see that going on. Right now, we see words spoken out against God almost everywhere you turn, and we see worn out saints. They are just worn out. Did you ever know that Satan had come to you to wear you out and out of that you have great irritability, great anger, and you did not know where it was coming from. Recently I heard something in a sermon that really got my attention. I have a great pastor; he is a great preacher. He said, "There are people whose behavior is so bad that no one likes it and no one wants to be around them. Their behavior is just unacceptable. Do you ever realize that those same people could be at home at night saying 'Why do I act like this? I don't want to act like this. What is the matter with me?'" I thought, "I never even thought anyone would think something like that." I am on the prayer team at the altar. A woman came up to me and said, "I need prayer. He was talking about me." She said, "Nobody likes me. I cause strife everywhere I go. I seem to delight in making people jealous. I have lost a job over it. I am about to lose another job over it. What is the matter with me? Why am I like this?" She just kept saying, over and over, "He was speaking to me." I was sitting the congregation thinking, "I never even thought about anything like that, that those people think that way." People really struggle with strife and anger today. It is not just domestic violence, but that is a big deal today. It is just that we are in the end times. Life is different because we are right near to Jesus coming back. I believe with all my heart he is going to come back in my lifetime. It may be another 30 years, I do not know. Unless I die, I am going to be alive in 30 more years.

It is going to get worse and worse and worse. Out of that, there will be more and more irritability, more and more anger, and you have to learn how to handle it. You and I have to learn what to do.

What can you do about it? How can you control it? For those of you who live in America, let me ask you a question. Right after Sept. 11, did you notice how everyone calmed down at the red lights? Did you notice how people just were not angry? We were all so hurt and so devastated that the little things that had really bothered us, now meant nothing. You could tell it meant nothing to people. It lasted for only a short while. I saw it happening and wondered how long it would last. It lasted maybe nine or ten months.

Then it started up again. Right now it is back to the way it was. Neighbors are getting mad at neighbors; people that work together are getting mad at each other. Parents and spouses all getting angry at each other. In domestic violence, it is not all the man doing it. There are women doing domestic violence, too. I know a woman who did domestic violence to her husband. Why do we have all this anger? It is because people feel the stress. They do not know how to deal with it. They blow it and they lose it. I will give you a saying, "He who angers you controls you." If they can make you angry enough, you will lose it.

What about people who have a serious anger issue? There are people who go into rages and hurt people, they blast people; they devastate people. What about them? One of their biggest problems is they do not know when to stop. They start in trying to deal with something and they get more and more riled up and then they cannot stop themselves. A lot of times, they do not even care that they are doing it.

They will say, "You deserved it." They try to defend themselves. They do not try to control. It hurts children. There are parents today who grew up in an angry home. A lot of times alcoholism brings out great anger. Maybe when the person is not drinking they are as nice as they could be. When the alcohol hits their system, it messes up their system on the inside. They become a different person. They become terribly angry. Those are people who do not walk in the Spirit; they walk in the flesh. They will tell you, "It just took over and I just let it happen." We have our part in that. If that is going on in your home, you do

have a part in it, especially if you are a woman. You cannot allow it to destroy your children. They will become angry people. That is the only way they see modeled in front of them on how you handle anger. That is why you see little boys grow up to be abusers, too. You will have to take your children aside and say, "Daddy has an anger problem. We are not going to let you grow up with an anger problem. You are going to get angry, but let me tell you how you deal with it." You teach your children how to deal with their anger. If you do not confront it in the right way, it will not stop. You cannot bury your head in the sand and hope it goes away and not ever deal with. You will have to confront. You say, "If I confront it, he will hit me. If I confront it, I will get fired. My boss will fire me." There are worse things in life than getting fired. Losing all your self-respect, all of your self-esteem, is worse than murder. Sometimes it seems like it is. Have you ever thought about this – do you know how to push that person's buttons so they explode? I had a lady say that to me one time. She said, "My husband is an abuser. I am a victim of domestic violence." I had done some reading on it because I was the head of a women's ministry and I had to have knowledge about it. I said, "Do you ever think you push his buttons?" She looked at me and said, "I know exactly which buttons to push. I know what to say, and he will take off. The thing is he can't stop himself and he hits me." I asked her "Do you ever feel like you are on a merry-go-round and things are calm. Then he starts acting a certain way, and you start feeling this way. Then he starts saying this, and you start saying that. Then it escalates to this and then it escalates to that. Then there is an explosion, bam. Everything calms down, then the next thing happens again, and you go around that circle. Do you ever feel that way?" She said, "Yes, you are describing my life. Yes I do." I told her, "You have to get off the merry-go-round."

How do you learn to control your own anger? Look at Galatians 5:16-17, "So I say let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. (Pay attention to the word craves.) The sinful nature wants to do evil which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants, and the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other so you are not free to carry out your own good intentions but when you are directed by the Spirit you are not under obligation to the Law of Moses. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature the results are very clear, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger." Let's look at another Scripture that is where you really need to live. In Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Jesus Christ have nailed the passions and the desires of their sinful nature to His cross and they crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives, let's not become conceited or provoke one another." The Bible also says, "Do not provoke your children to wrath." You can do that. You can rag on those kids and think you are so smart, and you are just provoking them until they finally explode in anger, or they explode in tears. If you stand before God, He will say, "You provoked them to anger, you provoked them to wrath. Do not do it."

There are some practical things you can learn about controlling your anger as a Christian. One is in that Scripture that says, "Nail that to the cross, crucify them there." When you were crucified on those days, it took about three days to die. You did not die the first day. It was a miracle that Jesus died as fast as He did. However, when you are crucifying your anger, you can feel like it is taking months for it to die. You keep going to God and saying, "Lord, I did it again. If You don't change me, Lord, I am not going to be able to change. It is going to take your power to do it." Another thing you can do is apologize to people. I am saying to be serious when you do. Do not just say, "I'm sorry I did that," and then turn around and do it again. That is not what God is talking about. That is not crucifying your anger. It is not taking it to the cross and nailing it to the cross. It is just saying, "I'm sorry and you need to forgive me." You need an accountability person in your life. You need someone who will set boundaries in your life if you cannot set your own boundaries. Ideally, you need to know what things cause you to get angry and figure out ahead of time how you are going to handle it and what you need to make sure does not happen so that you do not lose it. At the same time, you need an accountability person in your life and you need to give them permission to say to you, "You are angry again," because you probably do not know it is going on.

Galatians 5:22 says, "When the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (anger is not gentle), self-control (losing it with anger is not self-control, you are out of control). There is really no law against these things." Remember the Scripture that said you are not under obligation to the law of Moses, and here it says there is no law against these things. When you walk in the Spirit, you want to please God so much and you realize your absolute dependence on Him to do it the way it really is supposed to be done. It is not a law you are trying to keep. You do not have to remember, "Okay, now which one of these am I supposed to keep." You want to please Him so much.

Do you know that people fight a lot on the way to church? Do you know what I am talking about?" Everyone gets up, they are excited and ready to go to church. They get dressed in a hurry, get in the car, and on the way there you start having a fight. Who did that? The devil. He did it then because he does not want you to serve God. He does not want you to hear God. He wants to make you so mad you will not even listen to the sermon. Another thing that the devil will do about anger is when you identify it, he

will beat you up about it. He will tell you, "You are not any good, you are not anything. You can't conquer that. You are really a low-life kind of person to have that kind of anger." That does not help you heal it. That does not help you get rid of it. That does not help you crucify it. It does not help you nail it to the cross. Nailing it to the cross is what helps it. You just have to go to God and say, "Lord, if I need professional help, I am going to do whatever it takes." I am talking about you people that are listening to this that know you go into rages, you know you lose it. You know you hurt the people around you. You know you hurt the people you love the most. If you have to, go for professional healing about anger issues and anger management. You can only stuff pain and bad memories so long, then it is going to come out. It is going to erupt. The pressure of life will make that happen. It is better to deal with the issues. Go to someone that is a professional and ask them to help you identify the issues in your life that cause you to use anger like you do. If you go to God, He will help you with this. You will conquer it.

It can also be an iniquity that gets passed down. Have you noticed that? It can be where an angry grandfather has a child who becomes an angry father. He has a child who becomes an angry son, who has a child, and the anger continues over and over. You can break that iniquity of anger. If you look back in your family and say, "Yes, that is right. Anger everywhere you look in my family." As a Christian, you believe the Bible. Jesus said, "I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy." It says in Isaiah, "He was bruised for our iniquities." You go to Him and say, "Jesus, I want this iniquity of anger broken in our family. It is all over our family. I want it broken in me; I want it broken in our children; I want it broken in the aunts and uncles and cousins. In the name of Jesus, I have authority over this because Jesus gave it to me. You spirit of iniquity and anger, get out of our family right now in the name of Jesus." Even if you have to do it ten more times, you do it until it is gone. God would love to answer your prayer. It may take more time than you think it does, but He would love to answer it. You just stay in there until it happens.

You have to identify when your anger happens, and then you have to set up some roadblocks. You have to have a way to cool yourself off. What do you do when you can tell, "I am reaching the boiling point." Do some kind of physical activity; maybe golf, racquetball or tennis. Hard physical activity can take a lot out of you. Clean the garage. Ladies, if you are angry with your husband or your kids, and you know you are going to lose it and blast them and hurt them, then get out there and clean out the garage or clean out a closet. There are things you can do to make the anger back down. Get a flag in your life. When that flag pops up, it means "Watch it, it is getting ready to happen." What is the next thing you need to do? You need to name the baby, it is sin. "Well, they do this. They do that. If you lived at my house, you would understand." It is sin. Name the baby. "Lord I am sinning with this anger. I repent. I am so sorry. Please change me Lord." He will.

Another thing you can do is say, "How could I have done that differently?" This is just another practical way. Is it a sin to be angry. No it is not. Anger is a normal emotion. How do I know that? It says in the Bible, "Be angry but sin not." What is it talking about? It is not saying, "Don't ever be angry because you are not a good Christian if you get angry." It says, "Be angry but don't sin." So when you blow it and lose and hurt people and blast people, it is sin. You have to admit it is sin. Have you ever thought about where was the first sign of anger in the whole Bible? Cain got so angry because God was pleased with his brother's sacrifice and He was not pleased with Cain's. How could Cain have handled that? He could have humbled himself and said, "Lord I am really angry about that. It really makes me angry, but I am listening. Help me to understand." God would have said why and he could have corrected it. It is really not wrong to go to God and say, "I just need to tell You, I am so angry at this person. I am so angry I want to hurt them, I want to scream. I just want to do something. God, please take this anger away from me. It is wrong. Tell me how to handle this."

If you keep on doing it the way you have always done it, nothing is going to change, no matter how badly you wish it would change. For things to change, people have to change and situations have to change.

In those situations, even if you are not the major party in all of this, there are still ways you can change. For instance, when you are angry like this you can say, "I am not going to talk. If you will calm down, I will talk with you." You have to teach children how to deal with anger in themselves because they have it, too. You have to teach them because they do not know how to do it. Frustration causes anger. If you are at the head of something, there is so much pressure on you. People have to do what they need to do.

When they do not, it reflects back on you. Did you ever stop to think one of the reasons you get angry at someone else is because they make you look bad. Pray and ask God to give you a good heart, a pure and unselfish heart. Bind the devil. As I told you, I think it is going to get worse. I think as we get closer to the end, we are going to experience a lot of bad things. Do I think we are going to be raptured before the very, very end? Yes, I do. I think the Bible teaches that. That does not mean that we are not going to go through really hard, difficult things, including dealing with mean, angry people. Look at the people that crashed into the Twin Towers. What do you think would have happened if you had said to them, "I don't like it because you are angry." They probably would have shot you between the eyes. It is going to take a lot more than any of us have in us. You are going to have to ask the Lord, "How do I handle this one? How do I do it?" Then deal with it quickly. Denial is a bad issue. You are going to have to walk out

one? How do I do it? Then deal with it quickly. Denial is a bad issue. You are going to have to walk out of denial and say, "It worked. I am."

If you try something someone tells you to do about your anger and it does not work, try something else.

There are some anger anchors in anger. What is causing your anger? I am going to name some things and I want you to see if any of these resonate with you. Unforgiveness, loss and hurt, fear of failure, fear of rejection, stress, ignorance about the situation, lack of communication, unrealistic thinking, selfish thinking, stress from marriage, finances, children, job problems, not enough time with God, not walking in the Spirit. Yet, God says, "If you will crucify that, nail it to the cross, I will give you victory."

Do you really know Jesus? Is He your Lord and Savior? Ask Him to come into your life and say, "I have to have a changed life. Come in. You are God. Come in."

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. What does Daniel 7:25 tell us about why people are so angry?
2. What are the "anger anchors" you are able to identify with?
3. What steps can one take to manage their anger?
4. What does Galatians 5:16-26 tell us to do about anger?
5. How do we involve God in healing us from anger?
6. What did Jesus do with our iniquities when he died on the cross?

To watch the video on ANGER MANAGEMENT, Pillar Five, Relational Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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