

Moral Issues

Anger

The Bible distinguishes between the words “anger” (the Greek ORGE) and “wrath” (the Greek THUMOS). ORGE is defined as, “Indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled” (Thayer). Vine adds, “...frequently with a view to taking revenge.” However, THUMOS is “the sudden outburst of passionate anger” (*Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*) and “the blaze of temper which flares into violent words and deeds, and just as quickly dies” (Barclay).

In contrasting the two words, we note “anger” is a lingering, seething emotion which may develop over time. However, “wrath” is a passionate, “heat of the moment” type of response to our emotions. Since sinful anger will condemn one eternally it is important we learn how to deal with it (Galatians 5:19-21).

Bite your tongue. People will both unintentionally and intentionally irritate and upset us. Some do not deserve a response. Jesus refused to respond to His critics who were not interested in dialogue but in pushing Him to the limits (Matthew 27:14). The old country song “you say it best, when you say nothing at all” sometimes applies. Whatever the circumstance, listen to others before speaking. James writes, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...” (James 1:19). The book of Proverbs states, “He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly” (14:29).

Deal with it quickly.

God’s Word never encourages us to stew over our anger for days, weeks and months. Ephesians 4:26-27, “...do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” The more we allow our resentment to settle into bitterness the more likely such feelings are to turn into revenge and end in broken relationships. God expects us to deal with conflict quickly so we can avoid such results. It is easy for pride to ruin precious time because we refuse to resolve simple problems. God’s blueprint for conflict-resolution is a piece of wisdom that can improve our lives (Matthew 18:15-17).

Respond tactfully. In college, I minored in Communication Studies. I remember reading in my Interpersonal Communication course about red-flag and green-flag forms of communication. Red-flag communication was the type which made arguments worse and led to broken relationships. Green-flag communication was more inviting and relaxing and signaled healthy relationships. Long before this was a college course, Proverbs 15:1 taught, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” We need to have sense enough to realize what, when and how you say a thing can make a big difference in how someone responds to it! Be a peacemaker.

Forgive. Each of us has been or will be in need of forgiveness from the Almighty God. Chances are you have broken God’s law and heart in far greater ways than your neighbor or friend or spouse has broken yours. This does not minimize the sting sin can bring to our lives. However, it does force us to consider the thought of Ephesians 4:32, “...be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Christians must respond to those who have wronged them with the same heart of kind forgiveness God displays to those who have wronged Him!

May we not underestimate the importance of controlling our tempers. We can undo reputations and relationships in one moment of uncontrolled anger what has taken years to build. The best of Christians are those who have learned to be like their Master. If we aim to teach a lost world about our Savior we “must not quarrel but be gentle to all...” (2 Timothy 2:24). In so doing, the lost world may see a bit of the beauty of Jesus in us.

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