

# Supplement to “What Does the Bible Teach About Managing Anger?”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

It is a scriptural fact that we can control and redirect our thoughts and feelings. The apostle Paul was inspired to declare that we are in charge of what we think (Phil. 4:6-8). We can choose what we feel and how we think.

What we think determines how we feel; how we feel determines our motivation; and, our motivation drives our actions. Secular author Albert Ellis in Guide to Rational Living wrote that there are four parts to any action we engage:

- a) The event or circumstance (beyond our control)
- b) The self-talk (what we say to ourselves about it)
- c) The emotional response (what we feel about what we say)
- d) The action (c and d are determined by b). If we can say something healthy, helpful, or peaceable in b, then our feelings and actions will also be healthy, helpful, and peaceable.

Illustration: Road Rage

- a) Event - driver cuts us off in traffic; we narrowly avoid a crash
- b) Self-talk - We say, “What a selfish idiot; he tried to kill me!”
- c) Emotion - We become angry, despise the driver, want revenge
- d) Action - We either act out against him, or take it out on others

Or we can try to go in a different direction: Road Reasonable

- a) Same event - driver cuts us off in traffic; we narrowly avoid a crash
- b) Different self-talk - We say, “I’m thankful there wasn’t an accident!”
- c) Different emotion - relief, thankfulness
- d) Different action - adrenaline surge passes; we go on with our day without harmful

incident (Albert Ellis, 1913 - 2007, American psychologist/psychotherapist, cognitive-behaviorist who founded Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy)

Would this work in spiritual interactions? Consider: Brother Brush-off

- a) Event - Brother enters grouchy and brashly ignores my greeting
- b) Self-talk - “What is his problem?! Who does he think he is?! What did I do to offend him?!”
- c) Emotion - Upset, hurt, paranoid, vengeful
- d) Action - Treat him the same way next time; erect a wall against communication

Try the following instead: Brother Bear-with

- a) Same event - Brother enters grouchy and brashly ignores my greeting
- b) Different self-talk - “He must be having a bad day. I wonder if someone close to him is sick.”
- c) Different emotion - empathy, compassion, concern
- d) Different action - Offer an encouraging word or some help

How is the world changed by this approach?

- a) I remain at peace with myself, my brother, and my God
- b) My grumpy brother gets good treatment that has the potential to change his outlook
- c) Witnesses are edified and encouraged to do the same
- d) Brotherly love unity is strengthened

This approach is Bible based. There are three clear Bible principles of reciprocity:

- a) The First Principle of Biblical Reciprocity: repay good with good (2Cor. 6:11-13).
- b) The Second Principle of Biblical Reciprocity: repay evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21).
- c) The Third Principle of Biblical Reciprocity: love requires that all of our responses be good, regardless of the initial action or treatment (1Cor. 13:3-7).

So, do I need to change everyone around me in order to be at peace? No, I need to change me. If the world around me changes for the better, wonderful! And if it changes for the worse? It won’t have the power to take away my peace of mind.