

What Does the Bible Teach About Managing Anger? (Conclusion)

“Be angry and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26).

March 10, 2022 Thursday Indepth Bible
Class of the Trilacoochee church of Christ

Philippians 4:6-8

- “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.”

We Control Our Thoughts

- There are four parts to any action we engage:
 - The event or circumstance (beyond our control)
 - The self-talk (what we say to ourselves about it)
 - The emotional response (what we feel about what we say)
 - 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.

We Control Our Thoughts

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

We Control Our Thoughts

- Or we can try to go in a different direction: Road Reasonable:
 - Same event - driver cuts us off in traffic; we narrowly avoid a crash
 - Different self-talk - We say, “I’m thankful there wasn’t an accident!”
 - Different emotion - relief, thankfulness
 - 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*)

We Control Our Thoughts

- Would this work in spiritual interactions?
Consider: Brother Brush-off
 - Event - Brother enters grouchy and brashly ignores my greeting
 - Self-talk - “What is his problem?! Who does he think he is?! What did I do to offend him?!”
 - Emotion - Upset, hurt, paranoid, vengeful
 - Action - Treat him the same way next time; erect a wall against communication

We Control Our Thoughts

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

We Control Our Thoughts

- How is the world changed by this approach?
 - I remain at peace with myself, my brother, and my God
 - My grumpy brother gets good treatment that has the potential to change his outlook
 - Witnesses are edified and encouraged to do the same
 - Brotherly love unity is strengthened

We Control Our Thoughts

- There are three clear Bible principles of reciprocity:
 - The First Principle of Biblical Reciprocity: repay good with good (2Cor. 6:11-13).
 - The Second Principle of Biblical Reciprocity: repay evil with good (Rom. 12:17-21).
 - 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).

Anger Management

- Avoid frustrating situations by noting where you got angry in the past.
 - Matt. 26:41 - “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
 - Prov. 4:14-15 - “Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.”

Anger Management

- Reduce your anger by taking time, focusing on other emotions, avoiding aggression, and attending to other matters.
 - Phil. 4:8 - “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.”

Anger Management

- Respond calmly to an aggressor with empathy or mild, non-provocative comments, or with no response at all.
 - Prov. 15:1 - “A soft answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Anger Management

- If angry, concentrate on the undesirable consequences of becoming aggressive.
 - Psalm 37:8 - “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret--it only causes harm.”
 - Ask yourself: Why give them the satisfaction of knowing you are upset?

Anger Management

- Reconsider the circumstances and try to understand the motives or viewpoint of the other person.
 - Phil. 2:3-4 - “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Anger Management

- Train yourself to be empathic with others.
 - 2Tim. 2:24-26 - “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

Anger Management

- Be tolerant of human limits and patient with weaknesses.
- Be forgiving (ask yourself if you haven't done something as bad).
- Follow the great lesson of Christ.
 - Matt. 7:12 - “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Reduce your frustrations.
 - Find the source of your frustration, whether people, subjects, or situations.
 - Attempt to reduce or eliminate your exposure to these negative stimuli.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Reduce violent stimuli in your life.
 - Avoid violent movies, and violent, aggressive friends.
 - Be very selective with your friends, so that they do not goad you into anger and rage.
 - Eliminate drugs and alcohol as stimulants of anger.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Reveal yourself to others, and try to understand others.
 - Announce you may be having a bad day to others.
 - Attempt to indicate to others that you have noticed that they are having a bad day, and offer to listen or let them vent.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Stop hostile fantasies.
 - Cease dwelling on issues or people that aggravate.
 - Think smoothly and calmly.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Do not escalate the violence.
 - Aggressive action on your part may cause an equally aggressive response that starts a vicious cycle.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Suppress or convert your violent reaction.
 - Count to ten, take a deep breath, go take a walk, or get some exercise.
 - Think of the source of the aggravation and whether a violent reaction will accomplish any purpose other than remorse, which is not a viable goal.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Cease using temper to get your way.
 - While successful in the short term, using anger to win points is a losing strategy in the long run.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Use stress inoculation. This approach involves:
 - Being aware of our own irrational fantasies.
 - Learning a better understanding of why others are weak when they show rage.
 - Rehearsing how to be calm in the face of angering stimulation.

Controlling Anger Through Behavior Modification

- Meditation and prayer
- Instead of trying to determine whether we should react to difficult situations by letting off steam or by suppressing anger, the goal of the Christian should be changing the inner person; the more we are transformed, the more likely we will react with love, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control.

- Following the example of Christ, there may be a place for anger, but only in things pertaining to the honor and will of God; in all other things, we do well to remember:
 - The example of Jesus
 - 1Peter 2:23 - “Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously”
 - The words of David
 - Psalm 37:8 - “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret-it only causes harm.”