



ANGER/ABUSE

SCRIPTURE VERSES

Matthew 5:22

²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. Any anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-31

²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold....²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

James 1:19-20

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Proverbs 29:11

¹¹ Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.

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ANGER STARTS IN THE HEART

Rick Warren — February 23, 2014

“Whatever is in your heart determines what you say.” Matthew 12:34b (NLT)

A problem with anger isn't going to be solved by a trip to the doctor or an episode of “Dr. Phil” or a self-help book. The real secret to managing anger is God's power to change you on the inside. Romans 15:5 says, *“May the patience and encouragement that come from God allow you to live in harmony with each other the way Christ Jesus wants”* (NCV).

How does God help you with your bad habit of anger? He goes straight to the heart of the problem, which is a problem in the heart. Anger doesn't start in your behavior, your background, or your feelings. It starts in the heart.

The Bible says, *“Whatever is in your heart determines what you say”* (Matthew 12:34b NLT). Our mouths just betray what we're really like inside. Sometimes I hear people say something really mean or unkind and then they say, “Oh, I don't know what got into me. That's not like me.”

Oh, yes it is! Your mouth just reveals what's in your heart. Someone's harsh tongue reveals an angry heart. When you meet somebody with a negative tongue, you know he's got a fearful heart. When someone has a boasting tongue, it reveals an insecure heart. Someone's judgmental tongue just exposes a guilty heart. Somebody with a filthy tongue has an impure heart.

On the other hand, if you find somebody who's always encouraging others, he has a happy heart. If he's always speaking in a gentle way, you know he's got a loving heart. If he's able to control his words, you know he's got a peaceful heart.

Are you satisfied with the words that naturally come out of your mouth? If not, then you need a heart transplant. You need a new heart! David says in Psalm 51:10, *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me”* (NIV).

If your heart is crying out inside, it's because you haven't ever fully received the warmth and security of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus can replace a hurting heart with his love. He cares about your pain, and he will help you heal so that your words give life and reveal the hope you have in Christ.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What kind of speech comes most easily for you?
- ◆ How do you want your words to affect other people? What do you need to change for that to happen?
- ◆ Think about the people in your life who are natural encouragers. What can you learn from them?

GOD IS READY TO TAKE IT TO THE MAT

Rick Warren — September 5, 2014

“God blesses those who ... realize their need for him.” (Matthew 5:3a NLT)

God doesn't mind having a wrestling match with you, because wrestling is a contact sport. It means you're up close, and God would rather have you up close wrestling with him than have you distant and apathetic.

You know the problems you're having in your life right now? That problem you're having with your kids, your spouse, your finances, or your health — that's just the symptom. Your real struggle is with God.

What is your struggle with God? Your biggest struggle is when things don't go the way you want them to or as fast as you want them to, and you take matters into your own hands. You don't wait, you don't trust God, you don't pray, you don't think God will provide for your needs, and you get in a hurry.

Whatever the problem is in your life, it boils down to two things: Will you trust God to take care of the situation? And, will you obey God and do the right thing even if it doesn't make sense?

The root of all your conflicts in life is that you want to be in charge. You want to be God. You want to call the shots. So God says, “OK, let's have it out. Let's go to the mat. Let's wrestle — you and me, one-on-one. Let's have it out. Let's see who's really in charge here.”

The Bible says in Matthew 5:3, *“God blesses those who ... realize their need for him”* (NLT).

I love the analogy of wrestling, because the whole purpose of wrestling is to pin the other guy on the mat. How do you know when you've won? When they say, “Uncle!” or “I give up.”

God is waiting for you to say that. He'll wrestle with you as long as it takes.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What is the problem or struggle you've tried to handle on your own that you need to entrust to God?
- ◆ Why is it difficult for you to give control of this problem to God? What keeps you from saying, “I give up”?
- ◆ What changes can you make so that you can slow down, wait on God, and give him the chance to work for your good instead of taking matters into your own hands?

THE COST OF ANGER

Rick Warren — November 27, 2015

“A hot-tempered person ... gets into all kinds of trouble.” (Proverbs 29:22 TLB)

Anger has a price tag. When you realize that truth, you're more likely to control the anger in your life. The Bible tells us, “A hot-tempered man ... gets into all kinds of trouble” (Proverbs 29:22 TLB). Most of us have seen someone do something really stupid because that person was angry.

The Bible is very specific on the cost of anger. The Bible says:

- ◆ It causes arguments (Proverbs 15:18).
- ◆ It causes mistakes (Proverbs 14:29).
- ◆ It causes foolish things (Proverbs 14:17).

You've probably seen all of these results from your own anger and the anger of others. The Bible is also clear on the ultimate conclusion of our inappropriately expressed anger. Proverbs 11:29 says, “The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left.”

Think of the impact anger has on your family. As parents, we're often tempted to use anger to motivate our children. It works in the short-term. When you get angry, you put the fear of God (or the fear of you) into your children. Your kids may give you short-term obedience, but you'll lose in the long-term.

The end result of misplaced anger is alienation. You alienate the very people you love the most. Eventually, you'll get more anger back and finally just apathy. No one wants to be around you.

The truth is, you always lose when you lose your temper. You may lose your reputation, your job, your children, or the love of your husband or wife when you don't control your anger.

And it's never worth that price tag.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What are some examples of people you've seen become alienated from others because of their anger?
- ◆ If you've sometimes exhibited misplaced anger, what were the costs in your life?
- ◆ What is a practical way you can deal with your anger so that it does not cause pain for you.

HOW TO DEAL WITH WHAT YOU FEEL

Rick Warren — January 20, 2015

Learning to manage your emotions is the key to peace of mind. I want to share with you four important reasons from God's Word why you need to learn to deal with what you feel.

1. You need to learn to manage your emotions because they are often unreliable.

Your gut is often wrong. Your intuition is often flawed. Your emotions often lead you down a blind alley. You can't depend on everything you feel! Proverbs 14:12 says, *"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death"* (NIV). You don't have to accept everything you feel, because not everything you feel is right or authentic or will lead you in the right direction.

2. You need to learn to manage your emotions because you don't want to be manipulated.

If you don't control your emotions, they will control you, and you will be manipulated by your moods. And, if you're always guided by your feelings, other people are going to take advantage of you. Worst of all, Satan's favorite tool is negative emotions. He will use fear, resentment, and worry to wreak havoc in your life. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8, *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*

3. You need to learn to manage your emotions because you want to please God. God cannot rule your life if emotions rule your life. If you make your decisions based on how you feel, then you've made your feelings god, and then God can't be God in your life. Romans 8:6 and 8 says, *"To be controlled by human nature results in death; to be controlled by the Spirit results in life and peace. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God"* (TEV).

4. You need to learn to manage your emotions because you want to succeed in life.

Study after study has shown that your emotional quotient is far more important than your IQ when it comes to success. How many people do you know who ruined their reputation because of something said in anger? Or missed a job opportunity because of their lack of self-control?

The Bible says in Proverbs 5:23, "[People] get lost and die because of their foolishness and lack of self-control" (CEV).

When you give your heart to Jesus, that includes your emotions. So when you say, "I gave my heart to Jesus," you gave your emotions to him to be managed by him. Jesus wants to be Lord of how you feel, not just what you think and do. He wants to be Lord of your emotions.

"From now on, then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God's will and not by human desires" (1 Peter 4:2 TEV).

Talk It Over

- ◆ Do you base your decisions on your feelings? How do you know if a "feeling" is right or wrong?
- ◆ Why do you think it's important to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit? How do you do that?
- ◆ What about your emotions do you need to surrender to God today?

THREE QUESTIONS TO MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS

Rick Warren — January 19, 2015

“From now on, then, you must live the rest of your earthly lives controlled by God’s will and not by human desires.” (1 Peter 4:2 TEV)

What are human desires? It’s your emotions and your affections. Now that you are a Christ-follower, your life should be controlled by God’s will, not by how you feel. Let me give you three questions to ask about your emotions when you’re trying to figure out how to deal with how you feel. When you’re angry or upset or frustrated — whatever you’re feeling — ask these three questions:

“What’s the real reason I’m feeling this?” Maybe the answer is fear or worry. Maybe it relates to something your dad said to you years ago, and when someone else said it to you, he got all the anger against your dad that you pent up.

1. “Is it true?” Is what you’re feeling at that moment true? There’s a point in the Bible where Elijah gets so discouraged that he went to God and complained, “God, I’m the only one in the entire nation of Israel left serving you.” And God challenged him, saying, “Are you kidding me? I’ve got all these people who are still serving me! You’re acting like you’re the only one trying to do the right thing in the whole world! No. That’s not true.”

2. “Is what I’m feeling helping me or hurting me?” Will you get what you want by continuing to feel this way? A lot of feelings we have feel natural, but they’re actually self-defeating.

Let’s say you go to a restaurant, and the service is extremely slow. You wait a long time to be served, and then a couple comes in 15 minutes after you and gets their meal before you do. You get increasingly more irritated until you feel something welling up inside you.

What’s the real reason you’re feeling that way? You’re hungry!

Is it true? Yes. You’re frustrated because the service is slow. But is your emotion helping or hurting? Do you get better service by getting angry at the server? Absolutely not.

Does nagging work? Has it ever worked? When somebody tells you all the things you’re doing wrong, does it make you want to change? No! All it does is make you defensive.

When you ask yourself these three questions, you get a better grip on why you feel the way you do and what you need to do to help the situation.

That’s called managing your emotions.

Talk It Over

- ◆ Why do you think it’s hard to sometimes admit that the emotion we think we feel isn’t actually true?
- ◆ Think of a recent experience where you felt angry or frustrated with someone. How do you think asking these three questions would have changed the outcome of the incident?

REFLECT BEFORE REACTING

Rick Warren — February 21, 2014

“Stupid people express their anger openly, but sensible people are patient and hold it back.” Proverbs 29:11 (GNT)

Have you noticed you can't put your foot in your mouth when it's closed?

Proverbs 29:11 says, *“Stupid people express their anger openly, but sensible people are patient and hold it back”* (GNT). One of the best tools for anger management is delay. Just wait a minute! Don't respond right away to that email that upset you. When someone says something mean to you, walk away if you have to.

This verse is basically the biblical basis for the term, “Chill out!” When you start to get angry, give yourself time to chill out. Take time to think and reflect. Delay is a great remedy to anger.

What do you do during the delay? There are three questions you need to ask when you're reflecting before reacting:

“Why am I angry?” The problem is not your anger. Anger is a symptom. Anger is the warning light.

“What do I really want?” What is it that you're not getting? What is the need that's being unfulfilled in your life?

“How can I get it?” How can you get what you want from what's irritating you? I guarantee you blowing up and losing your cool is not the best way to get what you want.

When something ticks you off or makes you mad, the Bible says to first resolve to manage it, then remember the cost of losing your temper, and then reflect before reacting.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What character traits or features do you notice about people who are easily angered?
- ◆ What do you think you should do with your answer to the question, “How can I get what I really want?”
- ◆ How could remembering the cost of anger help you reflect before reacting?

THE ABUSE EPIDEMIC: SILENT NO MORE

Rick Warren — November 8, 2016

I said . . . 'I will not say anything while evil people are near.' I kept quiet, not saying a word . . . But my suffering only grew worse, and I was overcome with anxiety. The more I thought, the more troubled I became; I could not keep from asking: 'Lord, how long will I live? When will I die? Tell me how soon my life will end'" (Psalm 39:1-4 GNT).

The first step in breaking free from abuse, whether it's sexual or physical or verbal or emotional, is sharing with someone who can help you break free. Jesus said in John 8:32, "*The truth will set you free*" (NLT, second edition). Freedom comes when you open up and admit your pain to someone else.

In a study of 10 nations, it was discovered that between 55 to 95 percent of women who have been abused by their partners have never told anybody, and men are even less likely to talk about it or get help. Abuse is often called the silent epidemic because it's the big, pink elephant in many marriages that nobody wants to talk about. People suffer in silence.

If anyone in the Bible understood abuse, it was King David. He was the king who wrote most of the book of Psalms and who also spent much of his life dealing with abuse, because there were people who wanted to hurt, kill, abuse, defame, and ridicule him — all kinds of abuse. In more than 100 passages in the book of Psalms, David expresses his hurt, frustration, and anger at his enemies. He uses the word "enemies" nearly 100 times in the New International Version. He talks about the abuse that they heaped on his life.

But one of the things David modeled for us is this: Don't hold it in. In Psalm 39:1-4, David explains what happened when he tried to keep his struggles a secret: "*I said . . . 'I will not say anything while evil people are near.' I kept quiet, not saying a word . . . But my suffering only grew worse, and I was overcome with anxiety. The more I thought, the more troubled I became; I could not keep from asking: 'Lord, how long will I live? When will I die? Tell me how soon my life will end'" (GNT).*

This is a classic response to abuse. David was afraid to talk about it in the presence of his abusers, but his silence only made it worse: "I kept quiet, not saying a word . . . But my suffering only grew worse, and I was overcome with anxiety."

If you are experiencing this right now, I want you to know that God cares about you. I care about you. And there is hope. You don't have to stay in that cycle of pain, anxiety, and fear.

But first you've got to stop being silent. You've got to speak up and tell someone you trust. You've got to bring it into the light so that God can begin to lead you to healing.

Talk It Over

- ◆ What are the signs of emotional abuse? How can you help a friend who may be suffering?
- ◆ Why do you think many people who have suffered abuse find it difficult to accept God's love?
- ◆ Why do we suffer more when we keep our pain hidden?