

Part 35: Anger

Begin with a short prayer for the grace of openness and sensitivity. Share some of your experiences of separation from your family and how they affect your relationship with God. (20 minutes) Keep your sharing crisp and to the point and stay on time. Avoid wandering off the point or commenting.

Anger is the subject of the next three parts.

Anger is usually our reaction to things not being as we believe **they should be**. Some of the emotions underlying anger are hurt, frustration, fear and injustice. Because of its often negative effects, anger is usually seen as an unwanted emotion which is best kept in, and under control. It can have a power that scares us at times and may come out as violent behaviour (usually toned down in some way), irritability (and snapping back) or resentment (which can run very deep).

Anger is a very sensitive indicator of our attitudes and values. We seldom check whether these are correct, accurate or justified, and this causes the problems that we have with it. Instead of seeing what the anger is saying and whether it is valid or not, we ignore the source and react to the message and energy of our anger. An example of this is the elder brother of the prodigal who, believing that one had to earn what one received, could not accept his father's forgiveness of his wayward brother. This attitude had judged both his brother and his father as being wrong and he felt entitled to be angry and destructive with them as a result. (Luke 15:25–32)

Another attitude that causes much anger is that of **perfectionism**. It carries the idea that everything must be JUST SO and if it is not, WHY is it not? This produces non-acceptance, criticism, judgmentalism and resulting anger.

Jesus, in clearing the temple, shows the attitude that the Lords' temple is not to be debased by shady money-dealers. The anger he experiences gives him the energy to clear the temple by driving the dealers out. (John 2:13–17)

Anger is strong emotional energy and is itself neither good nor bad, but the way that we use it makes it a constructive or a destructive force within us.

Unacknowledged or repressed anger builds up an inner pressure that either eats at us with some stress-related ailment or leaves us touchy, irritable and eventually depressed. Anger is like a dog we own. If we dislike it, lock it up in the back yard and maltreat it, it will become our vicious enemy. Alternatively, if we accept it, care for it and train it sensitively, it will become our most faithful friend.

Reflect for 15 minutes on your own anger and how you relate to it.

How would you have handled the dealers in the temple?

Is your anger your friend or enemy?

Journal your reflections and then share as you feel is right. End and choose a reader.

During the week, explore your anger with God. What is it saying and what does it want?



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