**Anger**

What does the Bible say about anger? Should we be angry? Was Jesus ever angry? Was God? According to James in the New Testament, “The anger of man does not work out the righteousness of God.” Is our anger ever acceptable to God?

First, the Bible has much teaching on anger. Jesus tells us that if we harbor anger against another person, we have already committed murder in our heart. Continuing anger is unacceptable. Jesus did become angry several times during his ministry. He was angry at the people in the synagogue when he had decided to heal a man. Mark’s Gospel says, “He began looking around at them all in anger.” The leaders in the synagogue believed any work on the Sabbath was wrong. So healing on that day was wrong, too. Later Jesus corrects their idea of work on the Sabbath. He knew that if they had a son who fell into a well, or an ox that fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, they would work to get them out. So healing a man on the Sabbath is that kind of work—redemptive.

Another time Jesus was angry was when he drove the money-changers out of the Temple in Jerusalem. He made a whip of cords and drove them out, overturning the tables of the merchants, setting free the doves and other animals, and driving them all from the Temple. What was it that made him so angry about this? The merchants were filling the Court of the Gentiles with all the animals and noise and tables, so the Gentiles could not draw near to God. He quoted the scripture that says, “My house shall be a house of prayer for the Gentiles.” Jesus wanted everyone to be able to come to God.

Even God has anger. God expresses his anger against “…the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth in their wickedness.” This means that people know what is right and godly, but they continue to suppress this knowledge by doing evil. (Romans 1:18ff) God’s anger is defined as his fixed attitude against evil motives and unrighteous behavior.

Did you know that there is a commandment to “be angry” in the New Testament? The Apostle Paul writes, “Be angry, but don’t sin. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.” In other words, it is okay to be angry, but we must not let the anger linger. We must get rid of the anger before sunset. Holding a grudge is the sin; that is murder in the heart. The Apostle Paul tells us that church leaders should be slow to anger.

Anger does some bad things to our bodies. If we remain angry or are often angry, the heart speeds up, and blood pressure rises, and we can even get ulcers from holding it in. We need to learn ways to express our anger, but in positive words and with honesty. We can tell the one we’re angry at, “I am angry right now. I am not reacting well to what you just said,” or something like that. But realize that anger is from inside ourselves and not from outside. We are responsible for our anger.

Always recognize your anger; bring it out honestly and positively. There is a great book about this, entitled, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* by John Powell. He says there are five levels of communication: 1) cliché (like “hello” or “nice day.”) 2) Reporting things about others. 3) Intellectual discussion. 4) Talking about our feelings. 5) Talking about our feelings *about* our feelings. That last level is like marriage communication. It reveals who we really are.

Most churches and most people operate in the first three levels. But we must learn to operate on a deeper level, our feelings. Powell says that if we don’t express our anger or other feelings, “our stomach keeps score.”

We must recognize when we are angry. But many people cover their feelings with layer after layer of veneer. Anger is best expressed logically and with level voice, so people can learn to deal with this emotion, and so we can get along with each other.

God made us with emotions. He is the judge of them. We should deal with our anger quickly, and learn to forgive each other.