

Part Three: The Way Out

Session 20

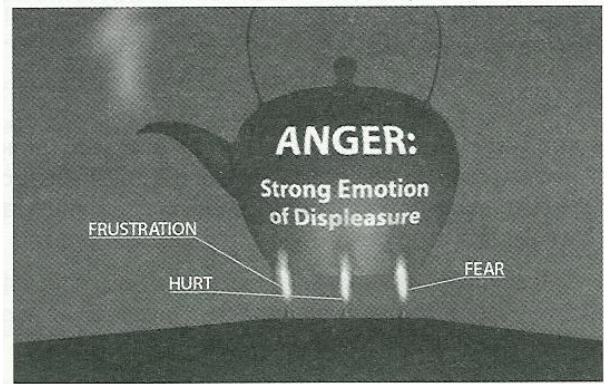
Overcoming Your Anger and Bitterness

“Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit.”
Proverbs 25:28

A. One-Word Descriptions of Anger

1. _____—Anger is a strong emotion of displeasure.
2. _____—Anger is a strong emotion that makes a demand that something change before we will be content.
3. _____—Anger is a strong emotion that generates great energy for the purpose of changing or eliminating the person or circumstance that displeases us.

- Nothing noted above necessarily has to be _____. Jesus Himself was highly displeased when He found the moneychangers in the temple (Mark 11:15-19). He demanded that they use His Father’s house for worship, not for extortion. He went on to destroy the business of the merchants who were violating His Father’s intentions.
- Here then is an important principle. Anger can be righteous when the displeasure is aimed at the same things that _____ is displeased with, when it makes the same demands that God makes, and when it sets out to destroy (change) those things that God opposes. Most anger is sinful anger, however, because we are concerned about our own interests—not God’s.



4. _____—Sinful anger causes distortion because it never sees the entire picture as God sees it, and, therefore, draws the wrong conclusions and responds in the wrong ways.

B. Common Causes of Anger (Numbers 20:1-9)

1. _____—the agitation that results from a thwarted goal
2. _____—the pain in the soul from personal mistreatment
3. _____—the uncertainty of how things will turn out

C. Common Distortions Caused by Anger (Numbers 20:10-11)

1. _____ is distorted.
 - Moses is sarcastic with the people.
2. Concept of _____ is distorted.
 - Moses acts as if he is superior to the “rebels” when at the moment he is a rebel too.
3. Concept of _____ is distorted.
 - Moses browbeats the people, showing his selfish concern for himself and his contempt for others.
4. _____ of _____ are distorted.
 - Moses “was so mad he couldn’t see straight” and failed to carry out a very simple instruction: “Speak to the rock.”

D. The Heart of the Issue (Numbers 20:12-13)—Unbelief

1. Unbelief sanctifies (spotlights or sets apart as special) something other than _____.
 - In this event Moses drew attention to the rebellious people. In the previous event where they were without water, Moses drew attention to the God Who could provide water (Exodus 17:2).
2. Unbelief fails to see _____ as the central component in the picture. It focuses on what displeases us instead of what displeases God.

E. Dealing with Anger

1. Confess the _____ and selfish discontent exposed by the anger.
2. Do not allow the anger to continue since it is destructive.
 - a. It is destructive to the “teakettle” to keep the “steam” bottled up inside.
 - This internal “boil” is the essence of bitterness—the seething animosity that says, “This is not fair. I have not been treated right.”
 - When the seething animosity grows into a strong emotion of displeasure, the bitterness turns into anger.
 - b. It is destructive to others if the “teakettle” blows up.
3. Put out the fires that fuel the anger—frustration, hurt, and fear.
 - a. Put out the fire of _____ by submitting to God’s sovereign control over all things. Easily frustrated people are generally very self-centered. Frustration is usually the result of thwarted goals. Selfish people have very strong opinions about how everything should operate and expect God and others to fit into their expectations.
 - b. Put out the fire of _____ by gaining God’s perspective about suffering and hardship (see Psalms, II Corinthians, I Peter, and James). People who have been hurt by others often need to face “their side of the wedge” and ask forgiveness for any bitterness while learning how to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14-21).
 - c. Put out the fire of _____ by learning about the nature of the God Who controls all things. Studying how Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, David, Paul, and others faced fearful events will be crucial to gaining a biblical perspective.

F. Concluding Observations from “The Way Down” Chart

1. Many people who through their unbelief and discontent become anxious live in a state of continual “what ifs” and worries. When they can’t stand the tension any longer, they blow up in anger moving from anxiety [3rd base on “The Way Down” chart] to anger [1st base].

They immediately are convicted about how un-Christian their anger is and confess it to God and others. But rather than dealing with the unbelief and discontent that has driven both their anxiety and anger, they move from anger [1st base] back to anxiety [3rd base] and continue their sin of worry.

They remain in their state of anxiety until they cannot stand the tension any longer and blow up in anger again, starting the cycle all over. Eventually, they grow hopeless and give up in despair.¹

2. Since God identified _____ as the root of anger in Numbers 20:12, the main solution will be gaining the right view of God as we have seen in Session 19—Overcoming Fear and Anxiety, Part 3.

CONCLUSION: To overcome anger, you must put out the fires of frustration, hurt, and fear, which are fueled by an _____ heart—a heart that does not see God as more than enough.

¹ This explains why a Christian who seems very godly—except for his “acceptable” sin of worry—does something that seems out of character for him—like blowing up at his spouse, coming to blows with his teenage son, or driving his car into the back of the car that cut him off. It is a very small step from the unbelief and discontent of anxiety (the emotion of uncertainty) to anger (the emotion of displeasure). He is displeased at all the uncertainty in his life.