

COPING WITH AN ANGRY WORLD

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Text: Ephesians 4:26-27

■ In his autobiography, *Number 1*, Billy Martin told about hunting in Texas with Micky Mantle. Micky had a friend who would let them hunt on his ranch. When they reached the ranch, Micky told Billy to wait in the car while he checked in with his friend.

Mantle's friend quickly gave them permission to hunt, but he asked Micky a favor. He had a pet mule in the barn who was going blind, and didn't have the heart to put him out of his misery. He asked Micky to shoot the mule for him.

When Micky came back to the car, he pretended to be angry. He scowled and slammed the door. Billy asked him what was wrong, and Micky said his friend wouldn't let him hunt. "I'm so mad at that guy," Mantle said, "I'm going out to his barn and shoot one of his mules!"

Martin protested, "We can't do that!"

But Micky was adamant. "Just watch me."

He jumped out of the car with his rifle, ran inside the barn, and shot the mule. As he was leaving, though, he heard two shots. He saw that Martin had taken out his rifle, too.

"What are you doing, Martin?" he yelled.

Martin yelled back, face red with anger, "We'll show that son of a gun! I just killed two of his cows!"

Anger can be dangerously contagious. As Proverbs puts it, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man ... or learn his ways" (Proverbs 22:24-25).

(Rowell, 12)

The problem with living in this world is that there seems to be hot-tempered men and women everywhere we go – men and women with which we must contend. It's a constant challenge to keep ones perspective in line with the Word of God amidst the prevailing attitude of anger in our society. We are made to feel that unless we constantly show our teeth, like a protective guard dog, that we will be taken advantage of or mistreated by others. So we face the world ready to do battle, while all the time wondering what are we fighting for.

We're not going to take it anymore. We're hyped, pumped, aggressive and consequently bear no resemblance to Jesus Christ.

In order to understand the way that we, as Christians, must live in this angry world let us first consider several *questions* on the subject of anger.

I. WHY IS EVERYONE SO ANGRY?

A. We claim that the problem is the stress that abounds in our society.

■ **George Barna writes**, “We Americans are not often patient people. How do you or your friends react when you choose the “short” line at the grocery checkout line only to find yourself waiting as someone wants an item returned or the clerk ask for a price check? Observe the actions of highway drivers during rush hour or a traffic jam, or listen to the retort of a customer being told that the item they want is out-of-stock.

Oh, we can cite reasons for our impatience: the frantic pace of life, the complexity of our daily existence, and the heightened expectations placed upon us by a growing range of sources. But the result is still the same: America has become a nation of ill-tempered tyrants. We want it all, and we want it now. Perhaps it is the wise man who knows how to pick his fights; but it is the American who decides that all fights are worth picking.” (Barna, 23)

B. Children are growing to adulthood without ever learning how to deal with their anger.

■ Take for example, the story of a young boy by the name of Cameron Kocher. *Time Magazine's* August 24, 1998 issue tells the story of what happened on a winter's day in 1989. Cameron Kocher, age nine at the time, while on a school snow day was playing Nintendo at a neighbor's home in northeast Pennsylvania. “A parent halted the game because the kids had made a mess, and Kocher went home. Angry, he took a rifle from the family gun cabinet and shot Jessica Carr, age 7.”

C. People feel justified in their anger and see no reason to suppress it.

■ Proverbs 29:11 says, “A fool vents *all* his feelings, But a wise man holds them back.” NKJV Italics added

II. WHEN IS ANGER RIGHT OR WRONG?

A. Anger is right when there is a just cause.

■ The proper term for just anger would be *righteous indignation*. **in·dig·na·tion** (inˈdîg-nâˈshən) *noun* Anger aroused by something unjust, mean, or unworthy. ¹

Therefore, *righteous indignation* would be anger brought on by the unjust or mean actions of another – especially when it is an obvious affront to the principles of God’s word.

This rules out getting mad because someone doesn’t share the same opinion as you. It also excludes being angry because they did not do what you thought that they should. We should agree to disagree agreeably.

B. Anger is wrong when it is unjust and out of control.

■ Matthew 5:21 & 22 tells us, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, *You shall not murder*, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’

“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.”

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What the scripture is telling us is that we are not pleasing to God simply because we have refrained from killing someone. ***God sees the heart and judges the heart of man as much as He does the action of man.***

III. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY ANGER?

A. Do not give anger a place in your life.

If anger finds a place in a person's life it will dwell there, growing stronger and stronger until it brings destruction.

■ Eric Zorn writes in the *Chicago Tribune* of a tragic accident that shows the terrible power of anger.

According to Zorn, a man and a woman were driving a van in the far-left lane of Chicago's Northwest Tollway in April 1994. In back were their two children. A white Cadillac driven by an ex-convict suddenly pulled up from behind them, tailgating mere inches from their bumper. The man driving the van slowed down. The Cadillac driver pulled into the right lane, passed the van, and then swerved suddenly back in front of the van, so suddenly that the van driver felt he had to swerve to avoid a collision.

The white Cadillac sped away.

The van driver accelerated and gave chase. He eventually pulled along side the white Cadillac and reportedly began yelling and screaming. According to a witness, the two men gestured angrily at each other.

The driver of the Cadillac then pulled a handgun and fired at the van. The bullet entered the side of the van and hit the baby girl, entering under her left ear and exiting above her right ear. The little girl lived, but she is blind in one eye, half-blind in the other, partially deaf, and suffers severe mental and physical disabilities.

The man who fired the bullet is in jail.

The parents of the little girl must now live with the terrible pain of regret.

Anger often escalates – often in tragic, tragic ways. (Larson, 16)

B. Let the love of God be your inspiration for keeping your cool.

■ Ephesians 4:31-32 reads, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

CONCLUSION

Hopefully answering these *questions* will help us to effectively cope with our angry world and to realize that our actions and words matter. We are to be light in a dark world and an example to an often confused world. In order to do this we must first *deal with* and *gain control over our own anger*. Unresolved anger or anger that has not been repented of will eventually destroy the heart. It’s volatile and unpredictable.

■ In a 1994 article, “War’s Lethal Leftovers Threaten Europeans,” Associated press reporter Christopher Burns writes:

The bombs of World War II are still killing in Europe. They turn up - - and sometimes blow up – at construction sites, in fishing nets, or on beaches fifty years after the guns fell silent.

Hundreds of tons of explosives are recovered every year in France alone. Thirteen old bombs exploded in France in 1993, killing twelve people and wounding eleven.

“I’ve lost two of my colleagues,” said Yvon Bouvet, who heads a government team in the Champagne-Ardennes region that defuses explosives from both World War I and II. “Unexploded bombs become more dangerous with time. With the corrosion inside, the weapon become more unstable, and the detonator can be exposed.”

What is true of lingering bombs is also true of lingering anger. Buried anger will explode when we least expect it.

(Rowell, 11)

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