



December 25, 2020

### **Biblical Principles on Dealing with Anger**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here in Spanish Fort, AL.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

This last few weeks we've no doubt heard the musical melody or words of a song that goes like this "It's the most wonderful time of the year..."

Is it really? I'm confused if it is.

Currently in the U.S. (and the world for that matter), there remains an uncertain, anxious and unsettled feeling and many are simply "on edge". Daily the tension grows.

Last minute shopping for a major holiday in the world has had many stressed, strained, and as we've perhaps seen on the news, simply angry and not in a festive mood. There is pent up anger on multiple levels.

Rather than an abundance of "Peace on Earth" currently, many are angry.

I've been examining events involving individuals in the Bible record who have exhibited anger and in some cases violent anger. In society today, we continue to see this attribute. The daily stress and strains of society only add to the mix.

I was asked recently, "How should one respond to an angry individual you know when confronted by them?"

What should you and I do when we encounter such an individual?

Here are some thoughts. If you are able, it is good to give space to that person and not attempt to develop a friendship with him/her especially if you see this attribute in them exhibited often. The Proverbs is a healthy place to start for better understanding from above "*Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go*" (Proverbs 22:24) If we can, it is best to not try to engage a person prone to anger in conversation or other interactions. Trying

to reason with such a person, especially if you disagree with something they have said, will often provoke them and may even result in them attacking you.

Sounds all too familiar right now in this nation's setting or atmosphere, whether political, moral, religious...etc. doesn't it?

When we find ourselves in a situation where we are forced to interact and converse with someone who is prone to anger, there are several biblical principles we can look to for guiding us. "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" (Proverbs 15:1)

If we respond with the same angry tone that the other person has used, the discussion will likely descend into a heated argument. If we respond with a calm tone and choose our words carefully, we might have a chance of disarming the angry person and defusing the anger. Some individuals seem to enjoy a squabble or argument and use it as an opportunity to "win the battle" by force or intimidation. If you don't play their game, you don't give them the satisfaction of winning the game. You might respond with, "I think it best we discuss this later" and then walk away.

Another form of anger sometimes comes in the form of being passive aggressive. Passive-aggressive behavior is characterized by a habitual pattern of passive resistance to expected work requirements, opposition, stubbornness, and negativistic attitudes in response to requirements for normal performance levels expected of others. The person may not raise their voice, or even become agitated. They just simply will not do anything that does not fit what they "think" is the only way, their way. Often they will not respond, but simply remain silent, stewing and fussing internally.

We even see world leaders sometimes do this. In the United States government, men and women use this form of anger regularly. Parties will passively aggressively spew their anger at one another, and gridlock ensues.

Many times people with this type of behavior will act this way towards authority.

There are occasions when it works to let a person vent their anger, frustration, or complaint and just patiently listen. When you are dealing with an authority figure who may have power in determining events in your life, this can be important. If you respond with being critical of them and aggressively disagreeing you had better be ready to accept the consequences. If you are able, it is better to get on their good side and find at least some point to agree with. By showing patient respect, you might cause the angry person to back off. Notice these instructions. "*By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone.*" (Proverbs 25:15) The MKJV renders the verse: "*In being slow to anger a ruler is won over, and a soft tongue breaks the bone.*" Matthew Henry comments on this verse: "Patience, to bear a present heat

without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons and to give persons time to consider them. By this means even a prince may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. . . Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation: A soft tongue breaks the bone; it mollifies the roughest spirits and overcomes those that are most morose, like lightning, which, they say, has sometimes broken the bone, and yet not pierced the flesh. I'm reminded of Gideon, who with a soft tongue pacified the Ephraimites and Abigail turned away David's wrath." Another commentary states: "Wise discourse, tempered by mildness and forbearance, is a more effectual weapon than implements of war."

Let's look at another similar proverb. "*As messengers of death is the king's wrath, But a wise man will appease it.*" (Proverbs 16:14) Matthew Henry's comments: "How formidable the wrath of a king is: It is as messengers of death; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck so great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken, as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David."

Here is another instruction concerning dealing with an angry person, and especially a person of power and influence. "*A gift in secret pacifies anger, and a bribe behind the back, strong wrath.*" (Proverbs 21:14) Obviously this is not promoting giving bribes and perverting justice. Other scriptures condemn giving and receiving bribes. (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Proverbs 17:23) The Proverbs uses the giving of a bribe to illustrate a principle of giving something to a person who may be angry with you but doing it in a humble and confidential way. The gift might be an actual object or could be agreeing with and supporting a particular decision or idea. Again, notice what Matthew Henry writes about this verse: "The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it."

You and I are to be peace makers. We are to, as Children of God, set an example to the world of how Christ would respond. We're supposed to be permitting His Mind to be in us are we not? (Phil 2:5).

Are we letting this world's and national situation affect us by making us become angry at others and perhaps our government, and then responding with our actions?

The scriptures are filled with helpful insight in regards to our relationships with employment, church, marriage, families, neighborhoods and schools, as well as for living in the world as Christ instructed. His Word is for our benefit and it's readily available for now.

Next week we will examine Scriptural instructions directed to any of us if we have a "quick fuse" and a have a tendency to get angry quickly.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

**-Scott Hoefker**

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