

Anger Can Be Constructive *(Pastor John T. Kurien)*

Why would a likeable high school boy in Minnesota suddenly explode in an outburst of violence and kill seven people, including his grandparents?

Anger is an emotional state that is experienced by everyone, but occurs in varying degrees of intensity, from mild annoyance to violent rage. Anger may be destructive when it persists in the form of aggression, but it can be constructive if it motivates us to correct injustice. Constructive anger is good, but destructive anger is the root of many psychological, interpersonal, physical, and spiritual problems.

In the Old Testament alone, there are nearly six hundred references to wrath or anger, and this theme continues on into the New Testament. Although, God is holy, compassionate, and good, one of the natures of God is anger. God created man in His own image and anger is a part of His given emotions. Moses, David, Jonah, and many other men of God are clear examples of how even holy men displayed anger. God is perfect and all knowing: He never misinterprets a situation or is misangered by sin. God's anger is always a reaction of righteous indignation against some form of unrighteousness. However, we are imperfect and we see every situation from our own judgment. Because anger can easily lead to sin and harmful behavior, it is often condemned in the Bible. Before Cain murdered his brother, the Almighty Lord warned him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin crouches at your door; its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Genesis 4:7—Amplified Bible). However, Cain could not control his anger and he consequently slew Abel and therefore, he had to depart from the presence of God. How tragic! Sinful self-interest often causes our perceptions to be distorted. The apostle Paul says in Colossians "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication of your mouth" (3:8).

When the children of Israel angered Moses at the water of strife, it went ill with Moses for their sakes (Psalms 106:32). Anger has destroyed numerous personal lives, families, and organizations. "When angry, do not sin; do not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down (Ephesians 4:26—Amplified version). A person must think before acting. Sometimes it is helpful to share our burden of anger with a friend or pastor; but it is always good to pour out our feelings to God. Confession to God and others as well with a willingness to forgive and to receive forgiveness helps us to control and temper our anger. That is why Solomon said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). If we can control our emotions before police officers or our authorities, we must be able to control the same emotions before our parents and siblings. In the epistle of James it says, "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to take offense and to get angry" (James 1:19—Amplified). Solomon gives us a warning, "Make no friendships with a man to anger and with a wrathful man do not associate, lest you learn his ways and get yourself into a snare" (Proverbs 22:24, 25—Amplified).

Anger is a God-given emotion and we cannot eliminate or prevent anger. However, there are different ways we can control or prevent the non-biblical aspects of its darker side. It is difficult to control emotions, but we can control the thought that give rise to feelings. We cannot solve problems if we avoid them in an attempt to maintain peace, but we need to speak the truth gently and with love. In the home, the church, and schools should people be taught by works and by example to evaluate different anger-arousing situations. When believers have realistic pictures of themselves as persons of value, there is less need to get angry. When people get angry, they often go through the day meditating on the causes of their anger. The self is very important and it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Committing one's life to the Spirit's control on a daily basis can be an effective way for the destruction of anger. Hopefully, by the grace of God, our anger will be changed and affected such that it will be directed for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

May God bless.