

Managing Anger



God wants all to live happy and productive lives, and will help in this endeavor. In 2 Peter 1:3-6 we read: *“As we know Jesus better, His divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life...and by that same mighty power, He has given us all of His rich and wonderful promises....so make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life...”*

Controlling your anger is important as it impacts happiness, relationships, employment, and health. Studies show that for every hour you are extremely angry, your life is shortened by one day. Unfortunately, most know from experience that Solomon’s warning (found in Proverbs 29:22) is true: *“A hot-tempered man...gets into all kinds of trouble.”*

What follows are five suggestions to help manage anger:

- 1. Remember, there are consequences to losing your temper.** Scripture notes that the foolish tend to think in the moment, whereas the wise think ahead to the potential ramifications and consequences. Be cognizant of your triggers. Remember that *“Hot tempers cause arguments”*^[1], and giving free rein to your anger is seldom beneficial. Solomon said, *“The fool gives free reign to his anger; a wise man waits, and lets it grow cool.”*^[2]

Think things through. Remember that when you lose your temper, you lose. When things get tense, take a breath, take a step back. Keep in mind that those who stay calm are better positioned to direct the conversation in a way that is positive and productive.

2. **‘Major on the majors and minor on the minors.’** This means one should ignore much of mean and non-constructive criticism that comes their way. It can be difficult but try to let these things be as water off a duck’s back. Proverbs 19:11 notes “...*When someone wrongs you, it is a great virtue to ignore it.*” The bigger person will walk away. The wise know that to ignore is to safeguard their goals and future.

Here is a truism: *What you allow yourself to get upset about shows the depth of your character and the level of your maturity.* Nothing can *make* you mad. It is a choice—a choice that can have dire consequences.

3. **Restrain your remarks.** It is not necessary (and seldom beneficial) to express all that is on your mind (or do what you would like to do, or can do). Proverbs 21:23 advises: “*If you want to stay out of trouble, be careful what you say [and do].*”

Approaching this counsel from another angle, Proverbs 16:23 reads: “*Intelligent people think before they speak.*” Reflect before you react. The actions and words of those who do are more likely to lead to a positive outcome.

4. **Don’t let things simmer.** Many times, outbursts are the result of tension that has been brewing for some time. Think of a soda can—a slight movement or little shake invites few problems. But there can be big trouble when the can is shaken or agitated. And the more agitated the can, the greater the potential problem when the can is opened.

The precept we glean from the analogy is to *try not to shake or agitate the can and do not open the can when it is agitated.* As a practical matter, this also means we should deal with potential problems sooner than later. Don’t let stress or ill-will build up. Tell people when your feelings are hurt and when you have concerns. Have a thick skin, but in closer relationships, tactfully let that person know if something is said or done that upsets you. Don’t be accusatory but let them know that you value the friendship and believe that similar words or actions in the future may negatively impact the relationship.

5. Be able to walk away. Arguments, confrontations, threats, and aggressive encounters can happen in almost any place and at any time. Beware. Decide now how you will react. Be ready to walk away. Winning a fight is NOT the objective. Walk away. If an argument is brewing, politely say something such as, *“I think it would be good to pause this conversation for a bit. Let’s discuss this when emotions cool down and we’ve had some time to think about what we really want to say.”*

Storming out is bad—but stepping back, temporarily, or stepping away from a volatile situation is often a mark of wisdom. Taking strategic pauses can help you manage your anger, so your emotions do not get the best of you.

[1] Proverbs 15:18

[2] Proverbs 29:11