

# MODULE 5: ANGER

## SESSION 3: EXPLOSIVE ANGER

### Key Ideas for This Session:

- Explosive anger is dangerous and can have grave consequences.
- For those with anger issues, it is especially important to minimize stress levels or seek professional help.
- The Bible provides wisdom and instructions on freedom from anger.
- Key verse: Galatians 5:1  
*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

### Explosive Anger is Very Difficult to Control and Can Have Tragic Results:

Most people agree that explosive anger is dangerous, and those that are prone to angry outbursts need to learn how to manage their anger and themselves.

Not every instance of explosive anger results in death or injury, but explosive anger is very difficult to control and often has tragic results. Some people who experience intense bouts of rage or anger say that they get so angry that they black out during their rage and feel like it is an uncontrollable “beast” unleashed inside of them that they cannot control.

Often, persons with deep stress and anger issues will self-medicate with alcohol and/or drugs to subdue their feelings and to keep rage at a distance. The drawbacks to this are obvious. Even if a person can tame their anger in the short term, substance abuse issues will ultimately lead to increased problems in life, and actually increase the levels of stress and anger in the long term. Another issue is that alcohol and drugs can also reduce a person’s ability to control their emotions and result in uncontrolled expressions of anger.

Extreme or prolonged stress can often contribute to anger being expressed in a fit of rage. One of the keys to keeping anger in check is to learn how to

minimize your own level of stress. For some people who are prone to feelings of extreme stress, it may be necessary to seek medical help. A physician may recommend counseling or even medication in some cases. From the spiritual perspective, the Bible provides foundational wisdom to overcome fits of anger which includes repentance and self-control.

In one of the Bible’s Old Testament stories, we read that Moses was angry with the Israelites because they were complaining all the time. Although God had instructed Moses to respond to the people by speaking a command to the rock, in a fit of anger Moses disobeyed. The full story is here:

Numbers 20:7-12

*The LORD said to Moses, <sup>8</sup> “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.” <sup>9</sup> So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence, just as He commanded him. <sup>10</sup> He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” <sup>11</sup> Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. <sup>12</sup> But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”*

How did Moses specifically disobey the instructions of the Almighty God? Why?

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For 40 years, Moses had led the people towards the end goal of the “Promised Land.” Now God was not going to let him in. Do you think this punishment was harsh? Explain.

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**Explosive Anger Needs to Be Addressed:**

Proverbs 14:17

*A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated.*

Proverbs 15:18

*A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.*

According to these Proverbs, what are some of the negative outcomes of acting out of a temper?

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In writing to the Galatians Paul said: *“The acts of the flesh are obvious; sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like.”* (Galatians 5:19-21)

Paul describes fits of rage as wrong and sinful. What are the other words in Paul’s list representing the kinds of feelings or emotions that could lead to anger? Explain.

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Why do you think domestic violence happens so often in our society?

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Anger can build up inside of a person until it reaches a boiling point. You may hear someone say: “I just couldn’t take it anymore,” or “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” or “I did everything I could to avoid blowing up, but I

just couldn't contain it anymore." What is an explanation you give when you've lost your cool?

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What might you do when you feel anger building up inside of you?

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Read Colossians 3:8

***But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.***

Paul is writing this not simply as a good suggestion. This is essential spiritual and practical instruction. If Paul was saying this to you, how would you respond if he was telling you to rid yourself of anger?

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## Freedom From Destructive Anger

The Bible teaches that freedom from sin, including anger, begins with repentance. Repentance is our recognition that anger is one of our problems. Repentance requires the admission that fits of anger are wrong. If we want God's help to free us from anger, we need to repent and to be willing to do our part in overcoming it. It is also important to know that part of dealing with our anger includes the process of making amends to those we've hurt through our anger. Making amends demonstrates our commitment to change and to respond differently.

Repentance involves several things that can be outlined as follows:

- Recognizing our wrongdoing or sin—in this case our fits of anger.
- Admitting or confessing our anger to God and to others.
- Asking God and those whom we have hurt to forgive us for our anger and the hurt we have caused.
- Asking God for help to keep us from becoming angry in the future.

When we fail to recognize our anger or refuse to look at and acknowledge the harm we do through our anger, we are said to be in denial. A person who has a problem with anger yet cannot or will not acknowledge that anger is their problem, will not gain freedom from it.

Why do you think we resist acknowledging our anger?

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The following passage describes the path to freedom and what that looks like.

Galatians 5:1

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

How can anger be compared to a “yoke (or bondage) of slavery”?

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Galatians 5:13-26

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup>For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” <sup>15</sup>If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. <sup>16</sup>So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*<sup>19</sup>The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup>idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup>and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>Those who belong to Christ*

*Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

How is a life of spiritual freedom contrasted from a life filled with “acts of the flesh”?

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**Being Slow to Anger Is a Goal in Anger Management:**

Psalm 103:8

*The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

James 1:19-20

*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

Why do these verses focus on being “slow to anger” versus not being angry at all?

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**Building up Self-Control Is Helpful in Eliminating Anger:**

Proverbs 16:32

*Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.*

Proverbs 25:28

*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*

Romans 12:21

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

1 Peter 3:9

*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

These are just a few verses that describe the value of self-control. Why do you think it is so important?

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Do you think it is even possible to repay evil with a blessing? Can you think of a scenario where you have done this or would like to do this?

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Self-control is difficult in a crisis moment when you feel your anger quickly escalating. Here is a list of techniques to help you get some “breathing room” in these situations. Check off the ones that you believe could work for you (or that you have tried):

- Disengage and turn away from a situation before you let your anger explode.
- Count to 10 before reacting to a situation that may lead to anger.
- Think through what is true and what the consequences will be if you blow up.
- Think about your breathing. Take a few slow, deep breaths and relax the muscles in your body instead of allowing them to tense up.
- Pray for God’s help in overcoming your anger problems.
- Avoid getting into situations that you anticipate will make you angry.
- Get enough rest and exercise. Rest and exercise are stress reducers.
- Get counseling if you experience serious stress and anger issues.
- Have a person like a good friend, a partner, or a mentor to talk with about your anger issues (someone in whom you can confide, who is supportive and honest, and will hold you accountable).

- When you get into a difficult situation ask yourself, “What is really happening here?”
- Repent whenever you get angry. Ask forgiveness from God and others. Make a firm commitment to work on your issues of anger and follow through with that commitment.

Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or consider these topics this week:

- *If you know you are prone to fits of anger, what can you do when things are calm to help prevent future outbursts? Make a list.*
- *Do you need to repent of your anger? If yes, admit and confess your anger to God and to those you have hurt. Ask them to forgive you. Ask God for the support to not become angry in the future.*
- *Study Galatians 5:13-26 and rewrite Galatians 5:22,23 in your own words or draw images below to represent these words:*

