

THE HUMAN HEART—Anger

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” (16:32)

INTRODUCTION—“The tragedy of the modern world is that man is the master of so many things, yet has not learned to master himself. In the broadest sense, self-control describes the mastery of appetites... Guided by godly wisdom and knowledge, the wise man disciplines his appetites and makes them his servant rather than his master.” (Thomas L. Seals, *Proverbs--Wisdom For All Ages*, pp. 108-109).

“The fact is that there are no damaging or destructive motives *per se*. Our emotional makeup is totally from God. All emotions however, can **become** destructive when we fail to express them in harmony with Biblical limitations and structures.” (Jay Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual*, p.349).

I. ANGER

- A. Not Always Bad. Like all other emotions, God built anger into man to motivate him to action. Feeling anger is not wrong... responding to anger is not wrong... responding to anger hastily and irresponsibly is wrong (14:29; 16:32; 19:11; 29:11). The man who is “slow to anger” (not the man “lacking anger”) is praised in contrast with the quick-tempered man who improperly expresses his anger (cf. Mark 3:1-6; Matthew 21:12-13; Ephesians 4:26-27).
- B. Reactions to Anger. These characteristics refer more to one’s control or lack of control, rather than inborn character traits of passion or passivity.
 1. Quick-Tempered. This man has no control over his spirit (25:28).
 - a. Ventilates His Anger (29:11; 12:16; 14:17). This man is likely to “blow up”!
 - Speaks foolish words (29:20).
 - Stirs up strife (30:33; 15:18; 29:22).
 - Is not seeking a solution to the problem, just a sounding board to voice his dissatisfaction.
 - b. Internalizes His Anger (Ephesians 4:26-27; Ecclesiastes 7:9). This man is likely to “clam up.”
 - Hurts himself (18:14; 27:3). He makes himself sick, tense, miserable, and self-pitying, whether he even realizes it or not.
 - Hurts others. He turns bitter, resentful, unforgiving—the very things he must “put off” (Ephesians 4:26-27,31-32).
 2. Slow to Wrath. This man has his hottest passions under control (16:32). He controls his anger. How does he do it?
 - a. Understanding (14:29). What does he understand?
 - b. Discretion (19:11).

II. HANDLING ANGER PROPERLY

- A. In Ourselves. How are we able to control anger and its destructive effects within ourselves?
 1. Break Underlying Patterns (19:19). Otherwise you will have the same problem over and over.
 2. Guard our Mouths (17:27-28; 21:23). “What” we say and “how” we say it pose the greatest problems with our anger.
 3. Overlook Transgressions (19:11; cf. Ecclesiastes 7:20-22; Ephesians 4:31-32).

- 4. Get Rid of Anger (Ephesians 4:26-27,31-32). Don't allow it to fester and build grudges.
- 5. Redirect our Anger to the Problem and Not the People (Ephesians 4:29).

B. In Others (29:8). How are we able to control anger and its destructive effects within others?

- 1. Respond Gently, Not in Kind (15:1,18,28; 25:15).
- 2. Bring a Peace Offering (21:14; cf. Matthew 5:23-24).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Is anger ever a commanded response?*
- 2) *Should a man's emotions be his master or his servant? How can he allow them to be his master? How can He make them his servant?*
- 3) *Does the solution to the sinful abuse of anger lie in attempting to turn off the emotion? Must it be turned off or controlled?*
- 4) *How can anger actually be constructive? How can it be destructive? Does the answer to those questions lie in **where** anger is directed? How does that make such a difference?*
- 5) *When one 'blows up' where is all his anger directed? When one 'clams up' where is all his anger directed? Do either of these people tend to be good, pleasant company?*
- 6) *Where should anger be directed?*
- 7) *What does vented anger produce? What does internalized anger produce?*
- 8) *Is anything constructive ever said when people are angry (14:17; 15:18; 29:20)?*
- 9) *Can anger ever be appeased by going head to head against someone else's anger (15:18)?*
- 10) *Why can the self-disciplined man be trusted to rule others (16:32)?*

Related Passages—16:14; 21:19; 22:8,24-25
