

Problems With Bad Temper

Do you have problems with a bad temper? Are you easily angered by what others say and do? If you answer “yes”, are you really serious about ridding yourself of anger? Or do you believe God agrees with you when you lose your temper with other people?

If you lose your temper often, you must face the fact that others who experience your tantrums will find you to be very hard to get along with. If you have great problems with anger, your family will probably:

- try to avoid too much of your company. Children with angry fighting parents usually try to go out as much as possible. Those with husbands or wives with bad tempers usually try to stay at work longer or find other outside activities which allow them to stay away from home more. Everyone *wants peace*. Those with bad tempers destroy peaceful atmospheres. Also those with bad tempers instil *great fear* and *terror* in their children when they discipline or punish them. They do not know how to discipline *firmly* but *lovingly*.
- develop problems with anger also.
- end up with bad nerves and feelings of stress.
- suffer upset stomachs, pounding hearts, sleepless nights and various stress-caused illnesses.

The reasons for defeat

Many Christians wish to rid themselves of anger and bad temper, but instead of turning from it successfully, seem to be often thinking and doing things which feed their anger. As a result, they are defeated and enslaved by their temper tantrums on many occasions. Does this describe you?

The two main things which defeat those with bad anger are:

- they refuse to repent of the selfish desires which cause them to lose their temper. James 4:1-2 teaches: “***Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war...***”
- they try to deal with their anger after it has flared up instead of beforehand resisting the evil thoughts which *ignite* it. They *never break the chain of wicked thoughts* in their minds which occur *before* their outbursts of bad temper. For instance, before having an episode of bad temper, they *constantly feed* on sinful thoughts such as, “She is upsetting me and making me angry” or “That rotten stinking.....(Swear words) is hurting me” or “The selfish pig is not treating me right again. I could hit him in the face” or “I cannot stand the way that pig of a wife keeps doing that to me. She makes me so angry”.

By not dealing with the causes of their anger – their wrong thoughts and desires prior to their temper tantrums – they are always falling into this dreadful sin.

The great danger of continuously practicing this sin

Galatians 5:20 says one of the works of the flesh is “*outbursts of anger*” (N.A.S.B.). Galatians 5:21 warns that people who continuously practice this sin show signs of not being members of God’s Kingdom.

If you observe people expressing bad tempers, their faces and words often express various forms of *hatred*. In temper, they will say such things to their children as, “I wish I never had you, you little mongrel” or to their wives or husbands “I hate you. I cannot stand you. I am going to leave you”. In Matthew 5:21-22, Jesus warns that people who do not turn from such things are in danger of hell fire: “*You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder,’ and whoever murders will be in danger of judgement. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.*” Here we see that those with bad tempers are committing murder in their hearts.

Who is to blame for our anger?

Those with bad tempers usually blame others for their bad temper. They say their workmates, parents, spouses, children, neighbours and so on are to blame for doing wrong to them. But the Scriptures put the blame on those with the bad temper.

One common cause of bad temper is our having too much emphasis on whether others like or approve of us. When they criticise us or show they do not like something about us, we go into a temper tantrum.

Trying to punish others and to play God

Those with bad tempers are examples of people who *pay back evil with evil*. They use their fierce anger to *try to punish* those they believe have hurt them or done evil to them in some way. For instance, when others criticise them or do not do what they believe is their right, they have a childish tantrum and abuse the person. Subconsciously, they think if they punish the other person with an outburst of bad temper, the other person will be too afraid next time to do anything contrary to what the angry person wants. Maybe as little children they learnt that if they lost their temper, their parents gave them what they demanded on many occasions. Later as adults, they continue the same baby-like behaviour.

Also those with a bad temper are in one sense *trying to play God*. They are attempting to force others to do their will. Romans 12:17-21 instead commands us: “***Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; If he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***”

More Biblical teaching on anger

Ephesians 4:30-31 commands us: ***“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (do not offend or vex or sadden Him), by Whom you were sealed (marked, branded as God’s own, secured) for the day of redemption (of final deliverance through Christ from evil and the consequences of sin). Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath (passion, rage, bad temper) and resentment (anger, animosity) and quarreling (brawling, clamor, contention) and slander (evil-speaking, abusive or blasphemous language) be banished from you, with all malice (spite, ill will, or baseness of any kind). (Amplified Version). Note here grieving the Holy Spirit is linked to speaking evil words to others, to bitterness, rage, bad temper, resentment, quarrelling and other similar things.***

Proverbs 15:18 says: ***“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger appeases contention.”*** (Amplified) Proverbs 17:19 states: ***“He who loves strife and is quarrelsome loves transgression and involves himself in guilt...”*** (Amplified)

Proverbs 22:24-25 reveals if we are around people with a bad temper a lot, we will often end up with a similar problem: ***“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.”*** Proverbs 21:19 declares: ***“It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman.”*** Proverbs 17:14 gives some great advice: ***The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.”***

Does God approve of certain types of anger?

At present, it is popular to talk about “justified” anger. Jesus’ actions in getting angry when overturning the tables of the money changers in the Temple (see John 2:15-17) and being very angry because of the hard sinful hearts of people (see Mark 3:5) are examples of truly justified anger. But note Jesus Christ is God. So His anger was God’s right holy anger against sin (see Hebrews 1:8-9). So unless our anger is a Holy Spirit-inspired anger against sin, we have no Biblical justification for becoming angry.

James 1:20 condemns all types of man-originated anger: ***“For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*** James here says ordinary human anger is contrary to the absolute rightness or righteousness of God. This is why when Ephesians 4:26 says, ***“Be angry and do not sin”***, it is approving a Holy Spirit-inspired anger towards sin and not sinful types of human anger.

Acts 17:16 records an example of genuine God-inspired anger: ***“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.”*** In Greek, the expression ***“was provoked”*** above is a form of the word “paroxuno”. In the context of Acts 17:16, Bauer says “paroxuno” means “aroused by anger, grief or a desire to convert them”.¹ Paul’s spirit was aroused or provoked within him by the Holy Spirit to be angry or grieved about the idolatry of the Athenians and probably their associated sin of not being submitted to Jesus as Lord.

At present, great numbers of guilty people appearing before courts of law because of murder, stealing, burglary, violent assault, car theft and so on are using the *hurts* and *emotional*

¹ Bauer, page 629.

abuses they have experienced in life to obtain lighter punishments. Even the wife of a continually sexually immoral American leader used emotional *abuse* as the *excuse* for her husband's activities. Abuse and hurts affect us as humans. But abuse is no excuse for doing evil. *We are responsible* before God if we do any evil.

In the specific matter of anger, we have no God-ordained right to become angry or bitter with any person who hurts us. This is no matter how badly they hurt us. I have suffered all my life because of two fellows who broke my nose when I was young. Also recently, some people did a great evil to my family. But I have no God-ordained right to be angry or bitter towards them. Psalm 37:8 wisely commands us: "***Cease from anger, and forsake wrath...***"

Bible Study Questions

1. What are the two main reasons Christians are defeated by anger and bad temper?
2. What does Galatians 5:20 and Matthew 5:21-22 warn us about anger?
3. Explain why those who have bad tempers are actually people who pay back evil with evil.
4. What do the following verses teach about anger:
 - a) Proverbs 15:18
 - b) Proverbs 17:19
 - c) Proverbs 22:24-25
 - d) Proverbs 21:19
 - e) Proverbs 17:14?

The answers for these questions are not written in the notes. You must interpret these verses yourself.

5. What does James 1:20 teach?
6. What is the only type of human anger which God does not regard as sin?