

ANGER AND AGGRESSION

How do we define human anger and aggression?

Anger is an expression intended to modify other people's behavior usually by words but may also be visible in primitive expressions of anger that are seen in our faces and body language.

1. The physical manifestation of anger is common to most cultures.
 - a. Action of the heart is increased
 - b. The facial color is heightened
 - c. The eyes become bright
 - d. The eyes appear to narrow
 - e. The mouth is commonly compressed
 - f. There is almost always a frown on the face
 - g. The chest appears to expand
 - h. The angry person often shows what can be described as a "hate stare"
 - i. The tone of voice will change
2. What happens to the victim of the angry person?
 - a. An attempt to appease the angry person
 - b. Verbal submission
 - c. Compliant behavior
 - d. State of fearfulness
 - e. Sometimes smiling as a form of appeasement
3. Where does anger often begin?
 - a. Frustration often occurs when we fail to achieve a desired goal where personal gratification is expected.
 - b. This frustration is almost always viewed as an unpleasant and unfair experience.
 - c. The frustrated person feels that there is a discrepancy between his/her expectations and reality where effort has not produced the expected and hoped for results.
 - d. This leads the person to feel that in spite of his/her best efforts the individual has failed to be rewarded for their behavior.
4. The basic theory is that the frustration leads to aggression.
 - a. Thus the person who has not received the expected gratification for his/her efforts will tend to act out impulsively in some aggressive behavior.
 - b. The failure to feel gratification leads the individual to feel what we often refer to as being irritable.
5. How is aggressive behavior learned?
 - a. There is a great deal of evidence that aggressive behavior is learned in a social setting
 - b. Children who observe aggressive behavior tend to respond in a like manner

- c. Children who observe violence on TV or other film forms show the same tendency to become aggressive
 - d. The bully tends to come from a family where aggressive behavior is commonplace
 - e. These homes are often the result of the same kind of aggressive behavior exhibited in the previous generation
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The following example is adapted from a case study by Gary Chapman with Randy Southern, "Family Relationships" Northfield Publishing – Chicago, 2001 (pages 243 and 244)

Debbie walked into the kitchen and saw Bill standing at the sink. "What are you doing now?" she asked.

"Just putting the dishes away," Bill replied as he toweled a plate.

"I was letting them air-dry in the sink," Debbie explained. "I was going to put them away in the morning."

I know," Bill replied, "but if you don't dry pans right away, you're just asking for rust." He opened a cabinet to his left and put a glass away.

"The glasses go in the cabinet next to the refrigerator," Debbie reminded him.

"I switched things around," Bill admitted. "It makes more sense for the glasses to be next to the sink."

"What if you want something to drink from the refrigerator?" Debbie asked with a hint of irritation in her voice.

Bill stopped and looked at her. "Did I do something wrong?" he asked.

"No, but I feel like I am doing something wrong," Debbie said. "For the past five weeks, you've been changing and rearranging the way I have everything set up. First, the bedroom dressers, then the closets, and now the kitchen."

"I think I have some good ideas for increasing efficiency in the house," Bill explained.

"Well, that's good news for our stockholders," Debbie said. When Bill didn't laugh, she took a deep breath and said, "Ok, if that's what you want to do, knock yourself out. Are there other efficiency 'red flags' that I should be aware of?"

Bill hesitated for a moment, "Well, yeah, but we can talk about things like folding laundry later in the week."

“Ooooooh, I’ll be counting the minutes until that discussion,” Debbie said.

“What is your problem?” Bill asked.

My problem is that I feel like I’m in a stage production of *The Odd Fellows*,” Debbie told him. “I married Felix Unger without even realizing it.”

“Hey, I’m not a clean freak,” Bill protested. “I have a certain system for doing things.”

“I suppose next you’re going to complain about the way I put the toilet paper on the roll.”

“I wasn’t going to, but since you brought it up...”

“I don’t believe this!” Debbie cried.

“I’m not complaining,” Bill assured her, “I’m just saying that having the roll come over the top makes it easier to use. It also looks better that way.”

“Aesthetically pleasing toilet paper – interesting,” Debbie said. “I take that back – I didn’t marry Felix Unger; I married Martha Stewart in drag.”

MANAGING AGGRESSION AND ANGER EFFECTIVELY

How do we unlearn angry, aggressive behavior?

This episode sounds like an innocent exchange at the beginning. However, as it progressed it was evident that Debbie was beginning to feel out of place in her own home and that she could not do anything right to please her husband.

Bill had an agenda that put him in the center of the events taking place in the home. This is an indication of a need to control his wife through innocent behaviors but at the same time telling her she was ineffective in keeping the home in order.

In effect we have some of the early symptoms of aggressive behavior that is both verbally expressed and evident in his and her behavior patterns. Without help in dealing with his control issues and her negative responses the result could be that this marriage would end up in divorce. If they have children who have to observe this in their daily lives what will they learn about using argument and physical actions to get things done the way they want them? Remember the first characteristic of anger on the first page.

Life is made up of personal choices. These choices will always have public consequences (Rick Hawks in several sermons here at The Chapel) theoretically we choose to be well balanced or we choose to be aggressive or angry.

THE WISDOM OF ALL AGES: “Before criticizing your wife’s fault, remember that they may have prevented her from getting a better husband.” (Anonymous)

How can I change and become the person I would like to be and no longer be an angry person who takes out my feelings of inadequacy and frustration on my wife/husband, family, friends and co-workers? According to Charles Spielberger, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in the study of anger, like other emotions, it is accompanied by physiological and biological changes; when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones, adrenaline and noradrenalin. (Quoted in a public affairs bulletin)

Anger can be caused by either external affairs or internal events.

- *Angry at a specific person (coworker, supervisor, family member)
- *Angry at an event (traffic jam, canceled flight, etc.)
- *Too much worrying or brooding about your personal problems
- *Memories of traumatic events
- *Memories of enraging events

Anger is usually expressed in an aggressive manner. It is a natural response to threats. Anger can inspire powerful, aggressive feelings and behavior which allow us to defend ourselves if attacked. In this sense it is good to have angry feelings.

HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND AGGRESSION AND ANGER?

INTRODUCTION: In the Greek the word *anger* implies a feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, and opposition and usually shows itself in a desire to fight back at the supposed causes of this feeling. An angry person is demonstrating feelings which can result in bitterness and wanting to fight back.

One of the key teachings in the New Testament (Covenant) is found in Matthew 5: 21-26. Here in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is drawing a sharp contrast between the teachings of the Old Testament (Covenant) namely the Laws of Moses and the basic teachings of the New Covenant. Note the contrast:

"You have heard it was said to the people long ago" which is assumed by most scholars and Bible teachers to refer to the Law of Moses namely the Old Covenant. In this Old Covenant the Law clearly stated that you are not to commit murder, and if you do you will be subject to the judgment. The judgment is in danger of (liable to the judgment) the sentence of the courts of the judicature which existed in every principal town. In Exodus 21:12-14 we read ***"Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death."*** There are some modifications to this basic Law but it stands as the basis for judgment in the Old Covenant.

Now Jesus turns to the same principal and speaks in relationship to the New Covenant. The new principal indicates that we are to live to a higher level of commitment than expected in the Old Covenant. Whereas in the Old Covenant we were dealing with the anger that led to murder and then punishment, Jesus is saying to us that if we are angry with our brother (friend, relative, neighbor, etc.) we are in danger of the judgment. And if you use the word 'Raca' (word for contempt) you are responsible to the law of the land, however, "***if you call your brother a fool; then you are in danger of hell fire.***" The word for 'fool' is more than a lack of wisdom on the part of the person you are referring to. It is used to indicate a person with the highest level of guilt and was associated with those who were living in idolatry and/or guilty of great crimes.

Jesus goes on to point out that it is essential for us to forgive anyone who has something against us. It is imperative that we go and be reconciled with our brother before we can stand in the presence of a Righteous God. We are to settle any negative matters we have with others so we avoid going to the courts and stand before an ungodly judge who might punish us under the laws of the land.

As long as we are in litigation through the formal Law Courts we are in violation of the law that requires us to love our neighbor and our Savior as ourselves. It is remarkable that in the Roman law of the "Twelve Tables", there is a direction to the plaintiff and the defendant to settle the matter while they are on the way to the Court thus saving them from facing the justice of the court system and perhaps end up in prison for a minor infraction. This is just good common sense, but in the case of Christians it is a way of life that is based on our relationship with Jesus Christ and his unending love.

AN EXAMPLE OF ANGER

Leonard Ingram is stated as saying that "**One out of five Americans has an anger management problem.**" A recent Gallup poll stated, "that one in six employees can recall a time in the past year when they were so annoyed by a colleague that they felt like hitting that person."

The following incident was reported in the St. Petersburg Times October 20, 1999.

"It happened in a Panama City suburb two weeks ago, during morning rush hour. One pickup truck was tailgating another. A traffic light turned red. The trucks stopped. Four people spilled out, shouting.

For several crazed minutes, they went at each other with makeshift weapons, including a garden rake and a baseball bat. One of the combatants climbed in the bed of the truck and started revving up a chainsaw.

Suddenly he was clubbed from behind - by a woman eight months pregnant. It took two nearby workers, a state trooper and a deputy sheriff to pull her off."

While this may seem like an unusual event it is happening all the time. Recently I pulled out of my housing division early one morning. A pickup truck came speeding up behind me and tooted his horn for the better part of a half mile until he came to where he wanted to turn of. Almost every day driving back and forth from work I see evidence of road rage and other examples of anger being expressed.

Anger being expressed in our schools is becoming more common each year. Domestic violence, road rage, workplace violence, divorce, and addictions are just a few examples of what happens when anger is mismanaged. As we have moved away from the agrarian society and into the crowded urban environment we have compounded the problem by putting so many people into smaller areas, crowding different cultural and ethnic groups together with out full understanding and acceptance of differences, and with the breakdown of things to do that keep people busy in significant work around the home and in the yards. Gone is the day of families working together to make a living from the land or in jobs related to farming and industry.

In 1900 over 33% of all Americans lived on a farm. Today that number is down to just under 2.7%. With the advent of the industrial revolution people moved from the farms to industry. In the 1950's over 33% of the Americans worked in factories and related businesses. Just as the farm numbers dropped so too the labor intensive jobs are disappearing. In the very near future the Government is predicting that fewer than 5% of all the American people will be employed in manufacturing. As we watch the increase in technology we see the decrease in traditional factory and business related jobs. We are in the midst of corporate downsizing today. Add to all of these changes we have with approximately 75 - million Baby Boomers going through midlife crisis and headed toward retirement. What does all of this say about the emerging life styles in our world today?

Anger shares some similarities with conflict resolution because some to the patterns are often the same.

1. Feeling of powerlessness
2. Popular entertainment
3. Feelings of not wanting someone to get the best of you
4. Feelings of sadness
5. Feelings of fear
6. Feelings of hurt
7. Feeling of being betrayed
8. Feelings of jealousy
9. Feelings of frustration

Five kinds of anger have been identified by psychologists.

1. Anger at others
2. Other's angry with us

3. Anger at something from the past (usually unresolved)
4. Abstract anger (raging at fate, the proverbial "chip on the shoulder")
5. Anger at yourself

What are some of the results of mismanaged anger?

1. Road rage
2. Domestic violence
3. Divorce
4. Addictions
5. Chronic illness
6. Workplace violence
7. School violence
8. Mass homicides

WAYS TO MANAGE AGGRESSION AND ANGER

Four steps to manage anger.

1. Identify the attitudes that predispose you to reacting in anger.
2. Identify factors from you childhood that prevent you from expressing anger
Appropriately.
3. Learn appropriate modes of expressing 'legitimate' anger to others, to tell them how
Their behavior is affecting you, without blaming or criticizing.
4. Bind up your 'anger wounds,' or lingering resentments against people you think
Wronged you.

Anger is one of the most difficult problems we deal with in our daily lives. There are so many different events and incidents that seem to frustrate us and cause us to respond with anger. Here are some examples for us to deal with.

CASE STUDY ONE

John is dealing with a problem that seems to crop up everywhere he turns. It seems that every job he has he finds himself getting into trouble with the leadership. In his first job he was asked to play with the company softball team. He had always played in the outfield and felt comfortable in that position. He was an excellent hitter and a good fielder.

One day the regular catcher broke his leg and the team captain who was also the company foreman ask John if he could take the catchers position. After a few warm-up pitches he was thrust into the game as the new catcher. For some reason he did an acceptable job and pretty soon he was the full time catcher. In fun he was compared to one of the all time great catchers in the major leagues.

One day on the job the foreman made a statement to John and without thinking John said 'boy you give some people an inch and they think they are a ruler'. The foreman turned to John and said 'go pick up your check your fired.'

The softball season had just come to close and it appeared to John that the foreman was just using the statement he had made as an excuse to get rid of him. It should be noted that John was fired from the next two positions he had. He seldom lasted on a job more than a few months.

1. What might have been some of the underlying reasons for John being fired?
2. Was the statement by John a disguised put down to the foreman?
3. What do you think was an underlying problem that John may have been dealing with?
In his own life?
4. Where do you think John learned to be so sarcastic?
5. What might you assume about John's home life as a child?
6. What kind of personality do you think John may have possessed?
 - a. Inferiority
 - b. Superiority
7. Can John be helped?

CASE STUDY TWO

Jack was an excellent musician. He sang on a regular basis on college campuses, various churches and at revival meetings. He and his wife had two children ages 4 and 6. Jack was a rather large individual who could be very imposing physically. Sometimes he seemed to be overbearing in his approach to others. He was not well liked by his peer group. Some of his professors felt that his personal faith was not what it should be. He seemed more interested in being on stage and performing than seeing people grow in their faith.

In counseling it soon became apparent that he and his wife were having problems. Jack would sometimes yell at her, slap her around and on occasion had broken things in the house. Jack wanted to change but never could bring himself to follow through on assignments that he was given by the counselor.

In talking with the counselor it became evident that Jack was not close to his father and in fact disliked him a great deal. When he talked about his mother he always mentioned how sorry he felt for her. She did not have an easy life. Jack would not talk about their relationship except to mention how sorry he felt for her.

People who knew Jack stated that his father was a very rigid man who was an extremely strong disciplinarian. Because the community was close knit no one would say much more than that about the relationship. The father was a well known man in the church and the denomination.

Jack and his wife separated for a short period of time. They actually got back together before the counselor felt they were ready. A few weeks later Jane called and said that she was filing for divorce. One day Jack got really angry, picked up an iron skillet and started toward her. She grabbed a frying pan off the kitchen stove and swung at him. He picked up the oldest son and held him out in front so she could not hit him. She picked up the youngest son and they circled the table until they realized what they were doing. They put the children down she gathered them up and went to her mothers home. They sere divorced soon after that.

1. What can you say about Jack?
2. What do you think was the basis for his anger?
3. Why did Jack have such a difficult time overcoming his anger?
4. What role did his wife play in his anger?
5. Is it possible that some people can never learn to control their anger?
6. Is there something she could have done to keep things from going this far?
7. What would you do if you were involved with one of your friends caught in this type?
Of relationship?
8. How logical is anger?

HOW CAN WE RESOLVE OUR ANGER?

In the first place we need to know that **anger is a choice**. Anger is our response to an external stimulus that triggers an internal response which is then acted on in irrational behavior. There is always an internal response to the stimulus which can then lead to an external response. The degree of the internal response controls the external response based on our choice.

In the Old Covenant we have the basics stimulus-response behavior that leads to an extreme anger behavior in which Cain kills his brother Abel.

THE SITUATION

The first two brothers come into the world born to Adam and Eve. We may know the story well but take another look at this situation.

Note Genesis 4:2b-7, *“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crutching at your door; it desires to have you, but you can master it.’ “*

You remember the rest of the story where Cain invites his brother Abel out into the fields and in his anger kills Abel. What was the real problem in this setting?

1. Cain as the oldest son knew the same story of redemption that Abel knew, that God had slain an Animal to provide clothing for Adam and Eve after they had sinned.
2. This was the first example of the shedding of the blood of an animal to cover the sins of mankind.

At some point in time they felt impelled to bring an offering to God to show their love and respect for what He had done for their parents in providing them with salvation from certain death as the result of their sin. As you remember God clothed them with the skins of an animal to cover them. He then led them into a new residence where they could be fruitful and multiple. Most scholars assume that the clothing of Adam and Eve involved the shedding of the blood of an animal to make the clothing for the first couple. This would then become the symbol of later Jewish worship especially as noted in the Day of Atonement. Here a lamb was slain and its blood was sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites in Egypt as a sign of salvation so that the angel of death would pass over their homes and spare their first born children. There are several things that we need to note about the animal that is slain for any sacrifice in Israel.

1. The lamb that is slain is primarily for food. It is to be eaten in conjunction with unleavened bread and bitter herbs and eaten in haste as a symbol of the Israelites leaving Egypt in a hurry.
2. The blood that was saved when the lamb was slain in Egypt was to be painted on the door post and on the top post across the top of the door frame. This was a sign that the Angle of Death was to 'Passover' that particular house of faith.
3. In the Gospel of John 1:29 we read "***The next day John (the Baptizer) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.***"
4. Paul in I Corinthians 5:7 refer to him "***For Christ is our Passover lamb, who has been sacrificed.***" Implied in this verse is the concept that he is our Passover lamb who takes away our sin through his death and by our faith in him.
5. Finally in the book of Hebrews we read "***When Christ came as a high priest...He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God... so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*** (Hebrews 9:11-28)

Now back to Cain and Able. It would appear that when God made the clothes for Adam and Eve, he may have instituted the idea of a Blood sacrifice to bring honor to his grace and love. Cain then would have known what God expected and in spite of that he offered God what he chose and not what was acceptable. This may explain why Cain was so angry with his brother who was accepted by God while he and his offering were rejected. As is evident in the story Cain made a deliberate choice to kill his brother out of anger. Look at the story as recorded above in Genesis 4:2-7.

1. When God accepted Abel's sacrifice and ignored Cain's sacrifice, Cain became very angry and his face was downcast.
2. God asked Cain why he was angry and his face downcast?
3. If you do right - will you not be accepted?
 - a. But if you do not do right sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, But you must master it.
 - b. The words crouching at your door is a picture of a cat (or catlike animal stalking its prey in tall grass) lying flat on its body with its head held up with its eyes fixed on its victim. The cat moves so slowly that the prey does not even know it is moving until it is close enough to spring on the prey and in a swift maneuver kills it.
 - c. The picture of anger that God is describing to Cain is like a cat creeping through the grass waiting to pounce on its prey.
 - d. Cain is reminded that he is responsible for letting the attacking anger having its way in his life. It is his choice.
4. God came to Cain and asked him where is your brother Abel?
5. Cain responded that he did not know and did not much care.
6. God reminded Cain that the very blood of his brother Abel was a testimony of his Choice because it cried out to God from the ground.
7. Then God places a 'curse' on Cain and drives him from the very land he had been Farming and it will no longer support him by yielding crops. In addition Cain will be a restless wanderer on the earth.

A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE STORY

CAIN AND ABEL - Gen 4:1-16 (key Hebrew words)

Qayin, Qain (Cain), "**spear-shaft**," and *qaanah*, "set up, establish, gain, buy," contain the bilateral root [*qan*], "set up, erect, gain."

Hebel, Habel (Abel), "breath, vapor."

minhaah "gift, offering, tribute." In contrast with *zebach* it means a "bloodless offering".

TchaTaa't, "sin, sin-penalty, sin-offering." *raabats*, "lie, couch as an animal."

Nowd Nod, "flight, exile; related: flee."

'*Elohiym* alone, to is used to designate the Supreme Being. This is sufficient to show that distinct pieces of composition are included within these documents. In the creation week and in the judgment, God has proved himself an originator of being and a keeper of his

word, and, therefore, the significant personal name *Yahweh* is ready on the lips of Eve and from the pen of the writer. The history of fallen man now proceeds. The first family comes under our notice.

Verse 1. In this verse the first husband and wife become father and mother. This new relation must be deeply interesting to both, but at first especially so to the mother. Now has begun the fulfillment of all the intimations she had received concerning her seed. She was to have conception and sorrow multiplied. But she was to be the mother of all living. And her seed was to bruise the serpent's head. All these recollections added much to the intrinsic interest of becoming a mother. Her feelings are manifested in the name given to her son and the reason assigned for it. She "***With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.***" Cain occurs only once as a common noun, and is rendered by the The Septuagint Bible reads [*doru*], "spear-shaft." The primitive meaning of the root is to set up, or to erect, as a cane, a word which comes from the root; then it means to create, make one's own, and is applied to the Creator (Gen 14:19) or the parent (Deut 32:6). Hence, the word here seems to denote a thing gained or achieved a figurative expression for a child born. The gaining or bearing of the child is therefore evidently the prominent thought in Eve's mind, as she takes the child's name from this. The word "man" probably intimates that Eve fully expected her son to grow to the stature and maturity of her husband. She has faith in God, and acknowledges him to be the author of the precious gift she has received. Prompted by her grateful emotion, she confesses her faith, she also employs a new and near name to designate her maker. In the dialogue with the tempter she had used the word God '*Elohiym*. But now she adopts *Yahweh*. In this one word she hides a treasure of comfort. "He is true to his promise. He has not forgotten me. He is with me now again. He will never leave me nor forsake me. He will give me the victory."

Verse 2. [His brother *Abel*.] *Habel* means "breath, vanity." Does a sense of the vanity of earthly things grow in the minds of our first parents? Has the mother found her sorrow multiplied? Has she had many daughters between these sons? Is there something delicate and fragile in the appearance of Habel? Has Cain disappointed a mother's hopes? Some of all these thoughts may have prompted the name. There is something remarkable in the phrase "his brother Habel." It evidently points with touching simplicity to the coming outrage that was to destroy the peace and purity of the first home.

The two primitive employments of men were the agricultural and the pastoral. Here is the second allusion to some use which was made of animals soon after the fall. Coats of skin were provided for the first pair; and now we have Habel keeping sheep. In the Garden of Eden, where the tree of life was accessible, an exclusively vegetable diet was designed for man. Whether this continued after the fall, we are not informed. It is certain that man had dominion over the whole animal kingdom. It can scarcely be doubted that the outer coverings of animals were used for clothing. Animals are presently to be employed for sacrifice. It is not beyond the bounds of probability that animal food may have been used before the flood, as a partial compensation for the desire of the tree of life, which may have been suited to supply all the defects of vegetable and even animal fare in sustaining the human frame in its primeval vigor.

Verse 3. This may denote the end of the week, of the year, or of some longer period. The season of the year was probably the ingathering, when the fruits of the earth and the firstlings of the flock would come in, and when it was not unnatural for the first family to celebrate with a subdued thankfulness the anniversary of their creation. And the present occasion seems to have been the time when Cain and Habel, have arrived at the years of discretion and self-dependence, solemnly come forward with their first voluntary offerings to the Lord. Hitherto they may have come under their parents, who were then the actual offerers. Now they come on their own account.

Here, accordingly, we ascend from the secular to the eternal. If Cain and Habel offer to God, we may imagine it was the habit of their parents, and has descended to them with all the sanction of parental example.

Cain brings of the fruits of the soil. We cannot say this was the mere utterance of nature giving thanks to the Creator for his benefits, and acknowledging that all comes from him, and all is due to him. History, parental instruction, and possibly example, were also here to give significance to the act. The offering is also made to *Yahweh*, the author of nature, of revelation, and now, in man's fallen state, of grace.

Verse 4, 5. Habel's offering differs from that of his brother in outward form. It consists of the firstlings of his flock. These were slain; for their fat is offered. Blood was therefore shed, and life taken away. To us who are accustomed to partake of animal food, there may appear nothing strange here. We may suppose that each brother offered what came to hand out of the produce of his own industry.

{The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering] but not Cain and his offering. We have now the simple facts before us. Let us hear the inspired comment: "*pistei*, 'by faith' Abel offered unto God *pleiona*, thusian, 'a more excellent sacrifice' than Cain" (Hebrews 11:4 "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain."). There was, then, clearly an internal moral distinction in the intention or disposition of the offerer's. Habel had faith-that confiding in God which is not bare and cold, but is accompanied with confession of sin, and a sense of gratitude for his mercy, and followed by obedience to his will. Cain apparently did not have this faith.

The two offerings are therefore expressive of the different kinds of faith in the offerers... This expresses the barren faith of Cain, but not the living faith of Habel. The latter has entered deeply into the thought that life itself is forfeited to God by transgression, and that only by an act of mercy can the Author of life restore it to the penitent, trusting, submissive, loving heart. He has pondered on the intimations of relenting mercy and love that have come from the Lord to the fallen race, and cast himself upon them without reserve.

The nature of Habel's sacrifice was the index of the genuineness of his faith. And the Lord had respect for him and his offering; thereby intimating that his heart was right, and his offering suitable to the expression of his feelings. This finding is also in keeping with

the manner of Scripture, which takes the outward act as the simple and spontaneous exponent of the inward feeling.

[And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.] A feeling of resentment and a sense of disgrace and condemnation take possession of Cain's breast. There is no spirit of inquiry, self-examination, prayer to God for light, or pardon. This shows that Cain was far from being in a right frame of mind.

Verse 6, 7. [Why are you angry? Why is face downcast?] The Lord does not yet give up on Cain. In great mercy he puts a question which implies that there is no just cause for his present feelings. Neither anger at his brother, because his offering has been accepted, nor vexation in himself, because his own has not, is a right feeling in the presence of the just and merciful God, who searches the heart. Submission, self-examination, and amendment of what has been wrong in his approach to God, alone benefit the occasion. To this, accordingly, the Lord directs his attention in the next sentence.

[If you do right, will it you not be accepted?] To do well is to retrace his steps, to consider his ways, and find out wherein he has been wrong, and to amend his offering and his intention accordingly. He has not duly considered the relation in which he stands to God as a guilty sinner, whose life is forfeited, and to whom the hand of mercy is held out; and accordingly he has not felt this in offering, or given expression to it in the nature of his offering. Yet, the Lord does not immediately reject him, but with longsuffering patience directs his attention to this, that it may be amended. And on making such amendment, he holds out to him the clear and certain hope of acceptance still. But he does more than this. As Cain seems to have been of a particularly hard and unheeding disposition, he completes his expostulation, and deepens its awful solemnity, by stating the other alternative, both in its condition and consequence-

[“If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”] Sin past, in its unrequited and unacknowledged guilt; sin present, in its dark and stubborn passion and despair; but, above all, sin future, as the growing habit of a soul that persists in an evil temper, and therefore must add iniquity unto iniquity, is waiting at the door, as a crouching slave the bidding of his master. This dread warning to Cain, expressed in the mildest and plainest terms, is a standing lesson written for the learning of all mankind. Let him who is in the wrong retract at once, and return to God with humble acknowledgment of his own guilt, and unreserved submission to the mercy of his Maker; for to him who perseveres in sin there can be no hope or help.

Verse 9. [“Where is your brother Abel?”] The interrogatory here reminds us of the question put to the hiding Adam, "Where are you?" It is calculated to strike the conscience. The reply is different from that of Adam. The sin has now advanced from hasty, incautious yielding to the tempter, to reiterated and deliberate disobedience. Such a sinner must take different ground. Cain, therefore, attempts to parry the question, apparently on the vain supposition that no eye, not even that of the All-seeing, was present to witness the deed. "I don't know, am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain's reply betrays a desperate resort to falsehood, a total estrangement of feeling, a quenching of brotherly love, a predominance of that selfishness which freezes affection and kindles hatred.

Verse 10. [What have you done?] The Lord now charges him with his guilt: "Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." In the providence of God blood has a voice crying to him to which he cannot but give heed. It is vain, then, to attempt concealment.

Verse 11,12. The curse which now fell on Cain was in some sense retributive, as it sprang from the soil which had received his brother's blood. The particulars of it are the withdrawal of the full strength or fruitfulness of the soil from him, and the degradation from the state of a settled dweller in the presence of God to that of a vagabond in the earth. He was to be banished to a less productive part of the earth, removed from the presence of God and the society of his father and mother, and abandoned to a life of wandering and uncertainty. The sentence of death had been already pronounced upon man.

Verse 13,14. [My punishment is more than I can bear.] The prospect of bearing this punishment as it presents itself to the eyes of Cain is so appalling that he shrinks from it as intolerable. To be driven from the face of the soil, inhabited by the other surviving members of the human family, to an unknown and therefore terrible region; to be hidden from the face of God, who manifested himself still to the race of Adam in their present abode; to be a vagabond and a fugitive in the earth, far away from the land of his birth; and to be liable to be slain in just revenge by anyone who should find him—such is the hard fate he sees before him.

Verse 15. The reply of the Lord is suited to quell the troubled breast of Cain. "Therefore." Because the fears of that you deserve go beyond what it is my purpose to permit, I give you assurance of freedom from personal violence. "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer seven times over." Cain will no doubt receive even-handed justice from the Almighty. The assurance given to Cain is a sign, the nature of which is not further specified.

This passage unfolds to us a mode of dealing with the first murderer which is at first sight somewhat difficult to be understood. But we are to keep in mind that the sentence of death had been already pronounced upon man, and therefore stood over Adam and all his posterity, Cain among the rest. To pronounce the same sentence therefore upon him for a new crime, would have been weak and unmeaning. Besides, the great crime of crimes was disobedience to the divine will; and any particular form of crime added to that was comparatively unimportant. Wrong done to a creature was not to be compared in point of guilt with wrong done to the Creator. The grave element in the criminality of every social wrong is its practical disregard of the authority of the Most High. Moreover, every other sin to the end of time is but the development of that first act of disobedience to the mandate of heaven by which man

fell; and accordingly every penalty is summed up in that death which is the judicial consequence of the first act of rebellion against heaven.

We are also to bear in mind that God still held the sword of justice in his own immediate hands, and had not delegated his authority to any human tribunal. No man was therefore clothed with any right from heaven to call Cain to account for the crime he had committed. It is plain that no man has an inherent right to inflict the sanction of a broken law on the transgressor. This right originally belongs to the Creator, and derivatively only to those whom he has entrusted with the dispensation of civil government according to established laws.

Cain's guilt seems now to have been brought home in some measure to his conscience; and he not only stands aghast at the sentence of banishment from the divine presence, but instinctively trembles, lest, upon the principle of retributive justice, whoever meets him may smite him to the death, as he had done his brother. The longsuffering of God, however, interferes to prevent such a catastrophe, and even takes steps to relieve the trembling culprit from the apprehension of a violent death. This leads us to understand that God, having formed a purpose of mercy toward the human family, was bent upon exercising it even toward the murderer of a brother. Hence, he does not punish his repeated crimes by "immediate death," which would have defeated his design of giving him a long day of grace and opportunity to reflect, repent, return to God, and even yet offer in faith a typical atonement by blood for his sin.

Verse 16. [So Cain went out from the presence of the Lord] seems to have been at the entrance of the garden where the cherubim were stationed. There, probably, the children of men still lingered in faith and hope before the Lord, whom they still regarded as their Maker and merciful Savior. They acknowledged his undeserved goodness in the form of sacrifice. The retreat of Cain from the scene of parental affection, of home associations, and of divine manifestation, must have been accompanied with many a deep, unuttered pang of regret and remorse. But he has deeply and repeatedly transgressed, and he must bear the consequence. Such is sin. (Adapted from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft)

For all practical purposes then anger is our problem. We cannot blame it on another person, nor can we blame it on God. Anger is our choice and we need to learn how to control it or it will control us. It is your choice.

From page the above discussion there are four main methods we can use to deal with our anger. This along with prayer and support from our family and friends can help us overcome anger and develop a new and more productive lifestyle.

1. Identify the attitudes that predispose you to reacting in anger.
2. Identify factors from you childhood that prevent you from expressing anger appropriately.

3. Learn appropriate modes of expressing 'legitimate' anger to others, to tell them how their behavior is affecting you, without blaming or criticizing.
4. Bind up your 'anger wounds,' or lingering resentments against people you think wronged you.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPAL FOR DEALING WITH AGGRESSION AND ANGER

James 1:19-27 ***“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it he will be blessed in what he does. If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”***

What does this mean? On a separate sheet of paper write down your answer to each of these questions. You may want to look at a Dictionary to define terms such as listen, speak, angry, moral filth, evil, humbly, accept, planted, faith, doing, walk, study, freedom, religion and worthless. While you think you may know the meaning of each word you may be surprised at the depth of the meanings specific words and how that changes the answer you might make to some of the questions.

An example: religion – *threskeia* = signifies religion in its external aspect, religious worship. In James 1:26-27 the writer purposely uses the word to set in contrast that which is unreal and deceptive, and the pure religions which consists of active behaviors designed to help others and keeping one pure and faithful to Jesus. The essential of true religions then is consistent with being a member of the Body of Christ which results in godliness, or the Love of God. (Adapted from Vines Expository Dictionary of the New Testament) The dictionary may not be quite as clear but it has a comprehensive definition that is very good.

1. What does it mean to be quick to listen? What difference might that make in dealing with our anger?
2. Why should we be slow to speak? What does this imply when we are dealing with other people?
3. What does it mean to be slow to become angry? How does anger hinder our relationship with God?
4. What is the implication of getting rid of all moral filth? How do you describe moral filth?

5. What is the prevalent evil we deal with as human beings? Why would getting read of this prevalent evil help us in dealing with our anger?
6. What does it mean to humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you? Does anger tend to separate us from God and others? How does this impact our inner life of faith in Jesus Christ?
7. What does James mean by not simply listening to the Word? What is he implying for those of us who are Christians?
8. What is the difference from listening to the word and doing the word?
9. What is the meaning of looking in a mirror and then walking away and forgetting what you saw? How does this imagery relate to our faith in Jesus Christ?
10. What impact will studying the Word of God have in our daily lives? How can it be of value in overcoming our aggression and anger?
11. How does a person experience freedom by heeding the Word of God?
12. What does James mean when he says "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue deceive himself and his religion is worthless?"

These are simply some random thoughts dealing with the whole issue of Anger. At some point in time I would like to modify this and put it into an article format. Joe