

De Sales

SPIRITUALITY CENTER

"Anger: A Volatile Subject"



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Ever been angry? Of course you have! Anger is a fact of life.

A sometimes volatile fact of life.

Like any emotion, it cannot be denied or suppressed. Nor should it be recklessly unbridled. It needs to be understood.

Anger is not sinful. However, how we deal with it – or fail to deal with it – can have sinful results.

We seldom plan to grow angry. Anger is an intense response or reaction to an injury or injustice, either actual or perceived. As such, it often catches us off guard.

Herein lies the difficulty. Precisely because of its spontaneity and intensity, anger can quickly get the upper hand...and get out of hand.

Anger is, as it were, an uninvited guest that can quickly become the master of the house. "Once admitted it is with difficulty driven out again. It enters as a little twig, and in less than no time it grows big and becomes a beam."

Francis de Sales counsels us: "It is better to attempt to find a way to live without anger, rather than pretend to make a moderate or discreet use of it. As long as reason rules and peace-

ably exercises chastisements or corrections, people can approve and receive them. However, when accompanied by anger or rage, this same reason is feared rather than loved."

It is better to let anger cool before making a decision or taking some action.

Jane de Chantal suggests: "Try to calm your passions and live according to sound reason and the holy will of God."

Unbridled anger can be very destructive. Sometimes, however, the ways in which we react to being angry are worse than the anger itself. "Many are greatly to blame who, on being overcome by anger, are angry for being angry. In so doing, they keep their hearts drenched and steeped in anger."

Francis de Sales continues: "It frequently happens that, by endeavoring with violence to restrain our anger, we stir up more trouble in our heart, and being thus agitated, the heart is no longer master of itself." When it comes to anger, don't fight fire with fire.

Still, we all fail in this regard. Despite our best efforts, we nurture attitudes, make decisions, take actions, and speak words in anger, hurting others – and ourselves – in the process.

What can we do to repair the damage? "As soon as you perceive yourself guilty of an act of wrath, repair it immediately by an act of kindness toward the person with whom you were angry. As they say, wounds are most easily cured when they are still fresh."

Repeatedly indulging in anger can lead to tragic results. When we brood over injuries, when we revisit old hurts, when we hold onto old resentments, when we cling to ancient disappointments, when we live in the distant past, anger ceases to be simply what it is: an emotion. Tragically, it eventually becomes a way of life.

Heed these words of wisdom and insight from the Book of Sirach: "Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. Should a person nourish anger against others and expect healing from the Lord? As a stone falls back upon the one who throws it up, so a blow struck in anger injures more than one. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then, when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven." (Sir 27: 25; 28: 2-3)

Avoid acting in anger. Avoid speaking in anger. Avoid wallowing in anger. Anger is an emotion: not a way of life.