

WHY ARE WE SO ANGRY?

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Text: Ecclesiastics 7:9

“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”

“Do not become quickly provoked,” the scripture tells us. Anger does seem to get out of control easily doesn’t it? Sometimes we become angry so quickly that by the time we realize we’re fuming we can’t remember why. All we know is that we’re mad!

■ In a press conference, Marty Carter, a new safety for the Chicago Bears had this to say about their rivalry with the Green Bay Packers, “I’m supposed to hate something, but I’m not sure what. I wasn’t even here last year, and I’m mad.” (Leadership, Vol. 17, no.1)

Doesn’t that seem like us at times? Being angry seems to be a part of living in this world. We live in an age of out-of-control law suits, protests, school massacres carried out by children, business place massacres carried out by employees and customers. We’re mad as we can be and we’re not going to take it any more.

To begin with, there is no way that we can excuse the immature tirades of a few overgrown spoiled children pitching temper tantrums in our society. However, in order to understand why it seems so many are living a life full with angry emotions consider with me several common *frustrations* that we all face.

I. WE ARE *PUSHED* BY CIRCUMSTANCES.

A. Unwelcome circumstances present themselves constantly.

Often the source of our frustration comes from our jobs. (Rowell, 60)

■ Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert cartoon strip, conducted his Second Annual “Highly Unscientific Dilbert Survey,” asking this question:

“If you had a chance to hit your boss in the back of the head with one of the following objects, with no risk of being caught, which would you use?” Here are the percentages for respondents’ answer:

A large bean burrito—19 percent

“Nerf” ball—17

Ripe melon—14

Framed certificate of appreciation—13

Outdated computer you are forced to use—13

Your last performance review, including the 600-pound filing

cabinet you keep it in—13

All your coworkers, bound by duct tape and flung from a huge catapult—8

A Ford Pinto with a full tank of gas—7

“I think the bean burrito won because it would make a really cool sound and it would be messy with or without guacamole,” said Adams. Over 64 percent of respondents selected a non-lethal response, knowing if their boss were injured, it would mean more work for them. --Lynn Walford for UPI (Rowell, 60)

B. We are often forced to deal with situations not of our own making.

■ Zig Ziglar gives this advice concerning dealing with difficult circumstances; “You need to identify the cause of stress. Is it a misunderstanding with a coworker or family member? Is it getting so involved in your responsibility that you lose your sense of perspective for the everyday facets of a balanced lifestyle? If so, what can you do about it? First, if it’s a people problem, take time to talk it out. Try to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. If you’re wrong, admit it and apologize. You won’t lose face. You’ll gain respect because you have acknowledged that you’re wiser today than you were yesterday. Second, find a pressure release. Take time for yourself, even if just a few minutes. Some quiet reading, a good walk, some relaxation, or a shift of scenery can work wonders.” (Pp. 179-80)

What does the Word of God have to say about dealing with these situations?

■ Proverbs 15:1 “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (NKJ)

■ Proverbs 15:18, “A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.” (NIV)

II. WE ARE *PRESSURED* BY LIFE.

A. Achievement is equated with happiness.

■ Lee Strobel, teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, offers a unique perspective on life in the nineties:

You really are a person of the 90’s...

If you feel like life is whizzing past you at 90 miles an hour. You work 90 hours a week, and you’ve still got 90 items on your to-do list. You’re on a 90-calorie a day diet because you look 90 pounds overweight in your swimming suit.

You’ve got 90 different bills to pay, and you’re already \$90 overdrawn—and that’s just the interest. You’re still paying \$90 a month on your student loan, and you don’t know where you’re going to get \$90,000 to send your kids to school.

You've got 90 channels of cable television, and there's still nothing worth watching. You drive your kids to 90 different activities and events a month. Your toddler just asked "Why?" for the 90th time today.

And you think everything would be fine, if you were just making 90 grand a year.

--Wayne Rouse (Rowell, 133 Fresh Illustrations)

B. Do more, more, more is the theme of the day.

We are finally pushed beyond our limit to complete the required task and in frustration we lash out.

■ As so many abused children learn, without forgiving those who hurt us, we cannot free ourselves from the grip of history. ... I have a friend whose marriage has gone through rough times. One night George passed a breaking point and emotionally exploded. He pounded the table and floor. "I hate you!" he screamed at his wife. "I won't take it anymore! I've had enough! I won't go on! I won't let it happen! No! No! No!"

Several months later my friend woke up in the middle of the night and heard strange sounds coming from the room where his 2-year-old son slept. He went down the hall, stood outside his son's door, and shivers ran through his flesh. In a soft voice, the 2-year-old was repeating word for word with precise inflection the climactic argument between his mother and father. "I hate you ... I won't take it anymore ... No! No! No!"

George realized that in some awful way he had just passed on his pain and anger and unforgiveness to the next generation. ... Apart from forgiveness, the monstrous past may awake at any time from hibernation and devour the present--and even the future.

-- Philip Yancey, "Holocaust & Ethnic Cleansing," in Christianity Today, August 16, 1993, submitted by Jay Martin of Manistique, Michigan.

III. WE ARE *PREOCCUPIED* WITH THINGS BEYOND OUR CONTROL.

A. Too many times, that which we cannot control eats at us.

■ Someone said, "Two things a man should never be angry at: what he can help, and what he cannot help."

B. The feeling that we are not in control of our life weighs heavy on our minds.

■ Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (KJV)

C. We dwell on the hurts inflicted on us by others—knowing the hurts can't be undone.

■ Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 4:31-32 to, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” (NKJ)

CONCLUSION

■ The Academy Award-winning movie *Forrest Gump* has been viewed by millions of Americans. Most people remember its line, “Life is like a box of chocolates,” but there is another line worth noting.

One of the central characters, Jenny, returns to her old home after her father had died. The farmhouse is dilapidated and abandoned.

As she reflects on the sexual abuse that she endured as a child, she is overcome by rage and begins throwing rocks at the house until she falls to the ground in exhaustion.

The scene close with Forrest Gump sympathizing, “Sometimes there just aren't enough rocks.”

Many of us struggle with anger, and some anger seems justifiable. Yet unresolved anger leaves us reaching and crying out for more rocks. The rage is never satisfied, and contentment is never found.

Only through the power of Christ can we find the strength to lay down rocks of anger rather than needing to reach for more. —Raymond McHenry*

The anger provoking *frustrations* that we all face are very real. But our help is also very real.

* Christianity Online *Men of Integrity* 11/23/98: Rock Throwing Rage