



ABBA Ministries

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Illuminating Life through Scripture

Anger

Anger is a natural human emotion that can be observed even in the youngest of children. It is probably the most powerful of emotions and is designed to prepare us for "fight or flight." The accompanying release of adrenaline causes hearts to beat faster, blood pressure to increase, eyes to dilate, palms to sweat, and the muscles to prepare for sudden, forceful action.

Anger is also a secondary emotion. Another emotion is always necessary before anger can be aroused. The primary emotion may only occur for a fleeting instant, but it must always be there for anger to be triggered. Three emotions that underlie anger in most, if not all cases, are hurt, fear, and injustice. Learning to control one's anger involves learning how to handle these three primary emotions.

The first step in controlling anger is to admit that you are angry. Anger is typically denied as long as possible because it is socially unacceptable to be angry. While the relatively recent emphasis on venting all anger has lessened the social stigma, unexpressed anger still underlies much of the depression, anxiety, tension, and other physical disorders which plague people living in modern society. Emotions tend to increase in strength when they go unacknowledged. Admitting you are angry soon after experiencing the anger allows you to more easily deal with this powerful and potentially dangerous emotion.

Once we admit to ourselves that we are angry, we can take the next step and look for the hurt, fear or injustice which underlies our anger. Finding the primary emotion underlying our anger allows us to identify those actions or attitudes which effectively deal with the source of our anger rather than merely masking symptoms or temporarily alleviating the intensity of our anger.

Every emotion is based on a perception of what has happened to us. In other words, what we believe about what happens determines how we feel about what happens. This is a key concept in learning to deal with the primary emotions which lead to our anger.

In order to act appropriately once we have admitted to ourselves that we are angry and have identified the primary emotions underlying our anger, we must consider whether or not our perception causing the primary emotion is accurate. Often, challenging our perception of an event is enough to change the primary emotion and thus completely defuse our anger. At other times, merely identifying our primary emotions makes other solutions to the anger evoking events more obvious. Either way, we lessen the intensity of our emotions (when necessary or desirable) to allow us to act calmly and with forethought.

Anger does not have to be destructive. Used wisely, the energy of our anger can greatly improve our day to day lives.