

## Handling Anger Well

His day had begun like any other. There were no clues to indicate how fateful, how life-changing, how shattering this day would be. He was young and impetuous but that alone was not the issue. By far and large he had grown into a decent man. He was one of a mistreated minority, reviled by the racial majority. He'd grown up hearing the jokes, the racial slurs, and the mistreatment and it burned deep within him. Fortunately for him he'd grown up privileged and had been able to avoid the majority of the mistreatment but as he turned his back, out of the corner of his eye, he could see the rolled eyes and the smirks. As he walked around corners, he could hear the snickers and the snide comments being made none too quietly. The bitterness burnt deep in his chest and grew every day.

One day, he saw one insult too many. One of his own was taking a beating. He'd been driving by and as he came up the street he'd seen some kind of commotion up ahead, next to a construction site. It was not unusual. It was not uncommon. But it was one too many. It had grown into a burden that was too great for him to bear and something in him snapped. He was neither small nor weak. His privileged life had allowed for a healthy diet and exercise. His father had insisted that he receive martial arts and military strategy lessons.

He came to a skidding halt, jumped out of the vehicle, and in five running strides was next to the abuser. The man, hearing the steps, glanced back from his brutality and, seeing only the rich clothes in the swift glance, started turning back toward his victim, thinking he had a partner in sin.

Everything was moving so slow. Though his movements were smooth with practice and quick as frog's tongue, it seemed to take forever for his arm to snake around the man's neck from behind. "The hand goes under the chin, cupping it as though it were your lover's" he could hear his combat instructors repeating over and over. "The other hand slips over the opposite arm, pulling the man back toward yourself, off balance and with half of his weapons eliminated." One quick jerk; a long, wet crunching sound; and the abuser suddenly went limp like a puppet whose strings had been cut. His body slumped to the ground, falling over his former victim in a heap. He twitched a few more times as his last breath left him and eyes finally closed.

He reached down to help the victim out from under the corpse. The skinny man, was still cowering and crying, unaware that the ordeal was over. When he realized what had happened, the range of emotions he felt nauseated him. He was relieved that the beating was over, and confused as to how it had happened. But as he looked on the rich clothes and healthy body of his deliverer, strangely enough he felt shame. Shame at being so weak. Shame at being the victim. Shame at having to be saved by this rich, effete, soft-handed man. He got up, gathered his ragged clothes around him in a pathetic attempt to regain his dignity. He looked down at his abuser's body, wiping the blood from his mouth and nose. He gave the body a kick in the head, hocked up and spat upon it. He gave a brief nod to his rescuer and took off, not wanting the authorities to find him anywhere near the body.

Our hero was coming down from his adrenalin jag. He was trembling and nauseous and his whole body felt weak. He glanced furtively around to see if anyone was around but it was a large construction site with no homes anywhere near and it was an off day. He looked for and found a shovel and dug a shallow hole for the body, near a wall that was to be backfilled soon. He climbed out of the ditch, grabbed the body by the ankles, and started pulling. The head lolled into an awkward position briefly and it gave him the creeps. The dead weight seemed impossibly heavy and the clothes kept catching on rocks and debris as he dragged it. It thumped down into the ditch and there was a snapping sound as another bone broke. The lack of reaction was unsettling. It was hard to keep in mind that this still-warm body a few minutes ago had been a living, breathing man. He rolled the corpse into the hole and covered it as quickly as possible. He could only hope that the back fill job would be done tomorrow because the body would quickly decompose in the summer heat.

He strode quickly back to his vehicle and left as quickly as possible. Part of him was elated that he'd finally struck back. Part of him was disappointed at the lack of reaction, of gratitude on the part of the victim.

He went through the rest of the day like an automaton with his mind distracted from the task at hand, reliving over and over that moment, as the feeling as much as the sound of the man's neck breaking ran through his mind.

That evening, he began hearing of an important man having gone missing. He'd failed to show up for work and he was sufficiently important that everyone noticed and began looking for him. Things unraveled amazingly quickly at that point. The victim had gone and told someone, who told someone else, who discussed it with a small group whose conversation was overheard.

Prince Moses had killed an Egyptian and the Pharaoh was out for blood. That brief instant that had been clouded by rage and complicated by rash action, meant he had to leave everything behind and run. He left his mother, his sister, and his brother behind to the tender mercies of the Egyptians. There was nothing he could do for them, even had he wanted to. He couldn't take that moment back and he wasn't sure he wanted to even now. To stay was certain death. Perhaps if he left, the God his mother had taught him about his whole life, would help him figure out a way to rescue his family; perhaps even his people. So, he set his face toward the east and began running.



Anger, directed rightly, can change the world for the good. Righteous people SHOULD get angry at injustice or at unjust wars. Listen to what Martin Luther King Jr. said about the Vietnam War at his own Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on February 4, 1968: "*God didn't call America to engage in a senseless, unjust war. . . . And we are criminals in that war. We've committed more war crimes almost than any nation in the world, and I'm going to continue to*

*say it. And we won't stop it because of our pride and our arrogance as a nation. But God has a way of even putting nations in their place.*" King then predicted this response from the Almighty: "*And if you don't stop your reckless course, I'll rise up and break the backbone of your power.*"

If today's technology had existed then, I would imagine the media playing quotations of that sort over and over. Right-wing commentators would use the material to argue that King was anti-American and to discredit his call for racial and class justice. King certainly angered a lot of people at the time but they NEEDED to get angry. And Dr. King did his best to make sure that not only his own, but the crowd's anger was under control.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVyySanZJ8M&feature=related>

The crowd, motivated by its righteous indignation at their human rights being set aside, marched peacefully across that bridge and came to a calm stop in front of the soldiers and police officers. After being informed that their tranquil walk in a public area was deemed to be "unlawful assembly" they simply stood praying as the soldiers in riot gear and gas masks, many of them mounted on horses, descended upon them with batons. These and other similar images changed the political landscape of the United States.

Our brother Paul warned us:

- **2 Timothy 3:1-5 HCSB** But know this: difficult times will come in the last days. (2) For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, (4) traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) holding to the form of religion but denying its power...

If there is ever a time to stand up for what is right, for the children of light to push back when darkness tries to overcome the world, it will be the latter days when our Master is about to return. He also informed us of what the last days will be like.

- **Mark 13:9-11 HCSB** "But you, be on your guard! They will hand you over to sanhedrins, and you will be flogged in the synagogues. You will stand before governors and kings because of Me, as a witness to them. (10) And the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations. (11) So when they arrest you and hand you over, don't worry beforehand what you will say. On the contrary, whatever is given to you in that hour--say it. For it isn't you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.



We must allow anger to have its rightful place. We must be angry about sin, about injustice, and about the unfair treatment of the weak by the strong. We must be angry about trillions of dollars wasted, about economies being ruined, about small businesses being run into the ground, and the pensions our elderly have paid into for decades being stolen from out from under them. We must be angry but we must not sin. We must not become reckless as young Moses did. We must not allow our rage and the systematic prejudice we have to live with as believers to drive us over the edge into criminal activity.

As we look upon a sinful world filled with the Devil's victims, we must rise up and DO something. But as we do, listen to Paul's advice:

- **2 Timothy 2:23-26 HCSB** But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they breed quarrels. (24) The Lord's slave must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, (25) instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance to know the truth. (26) Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will.
- **2 Timothy 1:7-9 HCSB** For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. (8) So don't be ashamed of the testimony about



our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, (9) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

- [2 Timothy 2:1-3 HCSB](#) You, therefore, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2) And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (3) Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.