

EXTRA! from the Creek

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the Church at Dyers Creek

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This week we're passing along to you
a page from the

Pastoral Counseling Papers

Counting to Ten

August 20, 2008

Have you ever felt angry toward a person or situation and wondered if your feelings were appropriate? Has your anger ever caused you to say or do something you later regretted? You're not alone. Anger is a universally expressed human emotion. It also happens to sit near the top of the least-comfortable-feelings list.

You've heard it said that when you're nearing the boiling point, you should count to ten. One small problem there: In the middle of your frustration, you probably prefer to count backward, getting to "Three, two, one. Boom!" Angry countdowns rarely end with a calm, relaxed resolution. They usually end in disaster. Or maybe instead of overreacting in anger, you try to ignore your very real feelings. Perhaps you bottle up anger and hope it goes away. But it doesn't go away; it hangs around. Bottled-up anger actually stays fresh longer!

What can you do? How should you respond when someone or something triggers your anger switch?

Take time to examine the situation before responding. Is this something that warrants a response? What kind of response? Are you simply frustrated, or does your anger stem from a desire to right a wrong? Make sure you're not letting anger control you before you confront a situation. A quick temper tries to make things right too soon and may escalate rather than solve the situation. If you have a tendency to react in anger, pray to be more patient in such situations. Allow yourself time to understand. In fact, attempt even to understand what might have prompted the object of your anger to act in the way he or she did.

Acknowledge that sometimes it is okay to be angry. The Bible doesn't tell us that we shouldn't feel angry, but it points out that it is important to handle our anger appropriately.

Carefully examine what your next step should be. Perhaps you can work things out through a calm discussion. Maybe you need to step away from the situation—create some space so you don't respond inappropriately. Or maybe you should invite a third party to help bring a new perspective to the situation.

Exercise good judgment in order to resolve your anger. And resolution is the key to dealing with anger appropriately. Marcus Aurelius said, "How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it." You probably know from experience how damaging unresolved anger can be. Don't get stuck there. If you are attempting to right a wrong, bathe your attitude and thoughts in love before confronting the object of your anger— and then do so as soon as possible.

Look inward. Maybe there's a lesson in this for you. Do you need to build perseverance? Grow tolerance? Develop a gentle spirit? God has filled your life with opportunities to grow— both in the understanding of the human condition and in your relationship with Him. Seek God's truth in the middle of your anger, and growth will be assured.

Sources

Checklist for Life: The Ultimate Handbook (Nelson)

Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (Tyndale)

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