**ANGER**

One of the most insidious and rationalized sins is **anger**. In fact, for many in the culture today, anger is not seen as a sin. It is seen as a natural response on “my part” to all of the stupid and thoughtless people around me. Even some of the cultural phrases seem to justify the retribution like: “they had it coming,” “I just tell it like it is,” and “if they don’t like it - tough.”

In the New Testament two words are used for “anger” with one of the words being more emotional than the other. Nonetheless, people who are self-centered and more focused on their own feelings can justify their anger more easily than those who are more oriented towards others’ feelings. “You made me angry,” is a cultural belief indicating that we aren’t generally angry and that it is everyone else’s fault when we do become angry. Nonetheless, many people who are more inclined towards narcissism have a difficult time accepting the fact that anger involves making a choice. In fact, we choose to become angry. If anger were universally applied to all potentially anger producing situations, then all people would become angry about the same thing. The reality is that people have to choose how to respond to situations: some choose to be sad, some choose to be frustrated, some choose to be confused, and some choose to become angry. One might say that some are “conditioned” to respond in a particular way, but then this could mean that they have no choice and no control. Prisons are filled with people who can make that claim. “Rationalized anger” is obviously evident on the highway today. Some drivers are convinced that they should become angry with every action taken by the drivers around them, while other drivers are simply thrilled that they can afford to have a car, or they wonder if the offending driver is rushing to the hospital with a sick child.

Once again - anger takes on the characteristic of MY feelings and what I have a right to do. Anger also manifests itself in control. Some people control other people with their anger by either causing others to have fear or by others being afraid to do anything that might disrupt the angry person any further or blow their thin fuse.

Anger can also be displayed in “being right all of the time.” “There are two ways to do things: my way and the wrong way, so you’d better do it my way if you know what’s good for you.” Finally, there is the even more narcissistic expression of anger, whereby when we do not get what we want we sulk, storm out of the room, make extra noise to get peoples’ attention and try to dominate others with our behavior.

Sadly, there are those who justify their anger on the basis of the Biblical event when Jesus tossed out the money changers from the Temple. Unfortunately, those who justify their anger by citing this Scripture often fail to read the entire passage. Righteous indignation in defense of the holiness of God, and protecting those who are being abused is not the same as self-centered anger which seeks to serve the needs of self at the expense of others.