

If Possible...  
United Church of Broomfield  
September 3, 2023

Romans 12:9-21 (New KJV)

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

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Have you ever gotten so fed up with someone that you thought about striking out at them? Maybe you got to the point where you didn't think you could take it anymore. Have you ever gotten so angry with your boss that you wanted to quit right on the spot? Have you ever gotten fed up with your spouse, your offspring, or with a parent? Have you ever felt that way? You don't need to say anything because I know the answer.

- Gina, a waitress, told how her boss offered her a ten-cent raise, "as a big favor." Gina saw it as a big insult, and her customers egged her on to quit, so she walked out. It made her day, she said, "to see the manager running from table to table, trying to fill her shoes."
- Chicago Cubs outfielder Andre Dawson paid a \$1000 fine for disputing a strike called by umpire Joe West. On the memo line of his check Dawson wrote: "Donation for the blind."
- Amy Grant, one of the biggest names in contemporary Christian music, was just a teenager when she caught the ear of a record producer. Out of the blue, he called late one night to offer her a recording contract. Just as Amy was accepting the recording contract, her father picked up the extension phone and told Amy she was grounded for talking on the phone after curfew. Here was the biggest moment of her young life, and she just got grounded. She was so angry that she didn't tell her parents about the record contract until the next day. (2)

We all get angry sometimes. Even Jesus got angry. We have a couple of well-documented instances where Jesus clearly lost his cool. I worry about anyone who says they never get angry. We may redirect anger in a positive way, we may contain anger so that there is no collateral damage from it, but anyone who says they never get angry is in denial. They have a serious problem that will someday manifest itself, perhaps in a tragic way. Don't ever let anyone tell you that it is un-Christian to be angry. Like any emotion anger is part of being human. And, with any emotion, there are appropriate ways and inappropriate ways to deal with them.

In today's reading from Romans, Paul offers specific suggestions for how to behave like a Christian – how to be loving, focusing on hope, dedicating oneself to service of others & God AND – how to deal with those pesky human emotions like anger and frustration.

In Romans 12 we read, <sup>17</sup> Don't pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions but show respect for what everyone else believes is good. <sup>18</sup> If possible, to the best of your ability, live at peace with all people. <sup>19</sup> Don't try to get revenge for yourselves, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. It is written, *Revenge belongs to me; I will pay it back, says the Lord.* <sup>20</sup> Instead, *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. By doing this, you will pile burning coals of fire upon his head.*

That is a demanding passage of scripture. Loving like God and Jesus can be difficult sometimes. It goes against our basic nature to be kind to those who do us wrong. But there is hope. It's the "If possible..." in verse 18 that catches my ear and reminds me of God's grace and mercy with my humanness - where there is hope for us. So, how do we become more loving, patient, and affectionate? One way is that we can learn how to deal with the potentially destructive emotion of anger.

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1) We must be careful with HOW we express our anger.

That is obvious, of course, but still, it must be said. Anyone can get angry – even the best of us.

Utah's 2013 "Mother-of-the-year" winner, Michelle Lehnardt, shared a less than flattering moment of anger. Her husband was out of town on business at the time. Her two little boys were outside playing while Michelle was seated in the kitchen, shucking corn, and using a toe to rock her infant's baby seat, trying to appease his crying.

Her arms were full of corn as she rose to go rinse them in the sink. The two boys then began banging on the glass kitchen door, which wasn't locked, but for some reason they chose to bang on the door for entry instead of just coming in. While the infant's cries increased, the boys pounding also increased to the point she thought they would break the glass. In a burst of anger, she yelled at her kids and threw the corn on the counter, hard. What a mess.

She eventually calmed down, called a friend to vent and cleaned up the mess. It was a little while later, at a back-to-school meeting with a teacher that she learned just how big a mess she'd made. For a get-to-know-me assignment, under "what makes you sad," her young son had written, "when my mom yells." She was mortified and ashamed. She immediately took steps to understand herself and avoid lashing out in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Be careful how you express your anger. Some of us may need professional help with our anger and we should not be embarrassed to get help. That's better than doing something we will regret later.

2) We must release anger.

If someone has done you wrong, go to them, explain why you feel betrayed, give them a chance to explain their side, then move on. Confront the person who has wronged you and then move on. Research has found that allowing anger to go without restraint actually escalates anger and

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<sup>1</sup> Lehnardt, Michelle. *Losing My Tempter: Utah's Young Mother of the Year confesses all.* [The Deseret News. 7/16/13.](#)

aggression and does nothing to help resolve the problem. There is little to be accomplished by nurturing feelings of anger and betrayal, and much can be lost.

Back in 2001, a Kansas City man and his friends were celebrating the Independence Day Holiday – lighting off fireworks and drinking heavily. So much so, that they annoyed the neighbors who called the police. Before the police arrived, someone had the brilliant idea to stuff the fireworks in the oven. The homeowner and his friends forgot about them. Then.... See where this is going? The homeowner turned on the oven to reheat some food and proceeded to blow the kitchen apart; police reports indicate that “the walls were all blown out [and] the oven flew right through one of the walls.” Fortunately, there were only minor injuries.<sup>2</sup>

Think about people, like that firework-filled oven, who have hurt and anger stuffed deep down inside themselves and all those deeply felt pains are lying there just waiting for someone to light the oven, and then stand back. Anger hurts not only others, but you. It kills the mind, body, and soul.

3) Channel your anger in a positive way; perhaps a loving way as the scriptures instruct.

Learn from your anger and use your anger not to destroy the person who has harmed you, but to better your own life. What might be possible?

Back in the 1970's during a Knicks-Bullets playoff game (the Baltimore Bullets are now the Washington Wizards), one of the Bullets players came up from behind and punched Knick's player, Walt Frazier in the face. Strangely, the referee called a foul on Frazier. Frazier didn't complain. His expression never changed. He simply called for the ball and put in seven straight shots to win the game, an amazing display of productive anger.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than letting our anger be a stumbling block, let it be a steppingstone. Anger is very much like love in that it is powerful and can be a great motivator, as long as we can appropriately channel it.

4) Like everything in our lives, turn your anger over to God.

In 1 Peter 5:7 it says, “Casting all your care upon [God], for [they] careth for you.” Give it to God. Ask God for their perspective. “Lord, what do I do with this? If possible, let me do with it as you would have me do.” God wants us to love above all else, but in our humanness, we become overwhelmed, and anger can get the best of us. In Psalms 55, David poured his heart out to God – David vented, “Lord, my enemies say such evil of me, they threaten me and they cause me great distress and suffering. Lord, I cry out to you morning, noon, and night...” Hold on fiercely to love and give anger, frustrations, irritations, disappointments and hurts to God.

It's not un-Christian to get angry. Anger is part of the human condition. Anger can even be constructive. How we deal with anger sets the follower of Jesus apart from the world. “If possible, to the best of your ability...” That's what God asks of us. That's what Jesus taught. After you've done all you can, turn it over to God. Pour out your hurt to God. Pour out your heart to God. God can heal your anger and turn it into better things, like love, patience, and compassion. It is possible.

AMEN

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.turbodieselregister.com/threads/missouri-man-bakes-fireworks-blows-up-kitchen.20347/>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. News & World Report, June 14, 1993, p. 37.