

"Your Inner Kettle"

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Theme: Decide to let anger work for you not against you.

Text: Proverbs 29:11

Here's a thought: The Bible does not teach us to *repress* our anger but to *harness* our anger.

Consider this kettle that I have filled with water and plugged into an electrical outlet. It heats water to a boil until its steam gets to the point of whistling and shutting off the switch. Without this switch the water would continue to boil until all the water has evaporated. A kettle is quite useful. With these safety features a kettle becomes even more useful.

We all get angry. We all have a kettle within. Will you and I continue to boil and whistle? Where is our anger's shut-off switch?

King Solomon provides wisdom for the ages in these words recorded about 3,000 years ago in Proverbs 29:11, "A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." NIV

You have a couple choices. You can:

Let Anger Control You

Or

Control Your Anger

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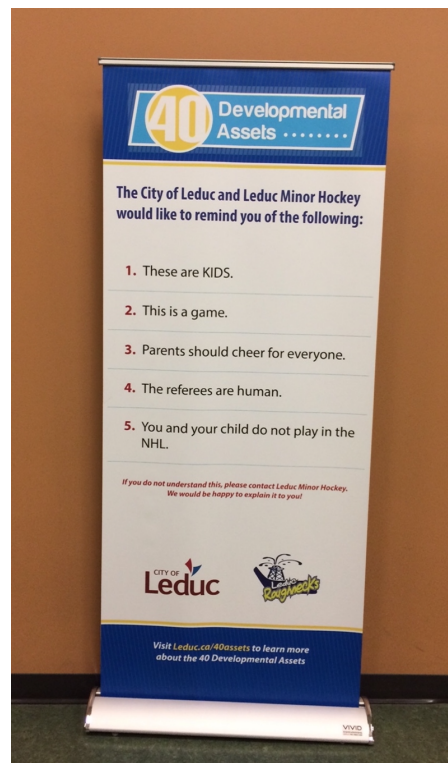
The Interlinear Bible translates Proverbs 29:11 as, "A fool utters his mind, but a wise man keeps it in until afterwards."

I can picture Elmer Fudd getting beet red and blowing his stack at Bugs Bunny. It's actually quite similar to the word picture found in Biblical Hebrew (www.ancient-hebrew.org/vocabulary_definitions_anger.html):

This word [aph] is a good example that demonstrates the concrete nature of the Hebrew language. This is the Hebrew word for a "nose," or "nostrils" when written in the plural form (naphiyim), but can also mean "anger." When one becomes very angry, the nostrils start flaring. A literal interpretation of 1 Samuel 20:34 is, "And Jonathan rose from the table with a burning nose," where the phrase "burning nose" means a "fierce anger."

For years, psychologists would encourage their counselees to express their anger by yelling at the top of their lungs and/or beating on someone with a pillow. What seems like healthy venting, however, can actually turn anger into rage. This is not helpful for a screaming toddler, a rebellious teenager, an immature twenty-something, a demanding middle-ager or a manipulative senior.

I can only imagine the behaviours that prompted this sign in a hockey arena in Leduc, Alberta:



Anger can come as a big surprise – in others and in us. There are times when I have set someone off or I have been set off by someone and asked, “Wow! Where did that come from? I didn’t see *that* coming!” Such overreactions can come from pressure building up within. Unresolved anger can quickly flare out of control.

Jeremy Taylor uses a vivid word picture:

Anger and lust are like a fire, which if you enclose, suffering it to have no emission, it perishes but give it the smallest vent, and it rages to the consumption of all it reaches.

A lot of people simmer under the surface until they finally blow up like a volcano, like this one that I remember (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/decades-catastrophic-1980-eruption-mount-st-helens-recharging/story?id=47461548>):

Mount St. Helens erupted on May 18, 1980, after two months of increasing volcanic activity. The 1980 eruption is widely considered the most disastrous volcanic eruption in U.S. history. It killed 57 people and destroyed hundreds of homes, 57 bridges and some 200 miles of roads, in addition to leveling tens of thousands of acres of forest.

The eruption sent an ash cloud more than 12 miles into the atmosphere in just 10 minutes. Fine ash reached the Northeast two days later and circled the earth within 15 days, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The volcano had been dormant for more than 100 years until seismic activity started to increase in March 1980.

What happened next caught many scientists by surprise. At 8:32 a.m. on the day of the big eruption, a 5.1 magnitude earthquake shook the area, and the mountain's summit and much of its northern flank collapsed, sending a huge explosion out from the north side instead of a typical eruption from the top.

Some 3.2 billion tons of ash spewed into the surrounding area, according to the United States Geological Survey. Streets and buildings were covered, and the eruption caused an estimated \$1 billion in damage.

Uncontrollable anger grows in the greenhouse of self-deception. When we are dishonest with ourselves and unaware of what is going on inside, we are vulnerable to emotions that are out of control. How many times have you and I said through gritted teeth, “I’m not mad”?

When was the last time you overreacted to someone’s words or actions? Are there certain people or certain situations that can set you off?

You can:

Let Anger Control You

Or

Control Your Anger



Some of us might want to interpret Proverbs 29:11 as, “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man *never gets angry*.” NIV Instead, King Solomon explains that a wise man keeps himself under control.

The Bible does not teach us to *repress* our anger but to *harness* our anger. In fact, the Bible records God as being angry many times. Jesus was angry a number of times in the Gospels. If the Lord can be angry and the Lord is without sin, the problem is not with anger itself but with the cause and expression of anger.

There is such a thing as righteous anger, like when Jesus drove out the people who had turned prayer and worship at the temple into a business (Matthew 21:12-13 and John 2:13-15). You can get mad over injustices and choose to do something positive about it or you can let the anger motivate you to gain revenge or act out destructively.

Husband to wife: When I get mad at you, you never fight back. How do you control your anger?

Wife: I clean the toilet bowl.

Husband: How does that help?

Wife: I use your toothbrush.

The Apostle Paul, who experienced and expressed anger many times, explains that it is possible to be angry and not sin in Ephesians 4:26-27:

26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. NIV

Note that Paul does not say, “Do not get angry.” Instead, he provides some parameters for anger. He cautions us not to sin in our anger or to be careful about how we express our anger. For example, I might be relieved to get some things off my chest while I cause significant damage within the explosion zone. While it can be helpful to have a good night’s rest to calm down and return to

the issue, the principle that Paul is advocating is to avoid letting issues fester over time. One of the largest doors through which demons enter people is the door of unforgiveness. It is alarming how Satan can use unsettled anger to harm us spiritually, psychologically, relationally and even physically!

Imagine snatching a red-hot coal from a campfire and slipping it into your pocket. It would not only burn a hole in your jeans but it would burn a hole in your leg! I come from an English heritage that valued a stiff upper lip and strong control of emotions. I certainly don't claim perfection in anger management and I continually struggle with letting issues build and in expressing my thoughts and feelings in *assertive* rather than *angry* ways.

One of the most psychologically, spiritually, physically and relationally damaging things you can do is to repress your anger. Suppressed or repressed anger can lead to depression. It would be an unfair oversimplification to accuse everyone who struggles with depression of harbouring unforgiveness, but it would be naïve and negligent to ignore the effects it can have on our health.

Anger can become bitterness, whose roots can influence everything we think, say or do, as alluded to in Hebrews 12:14-15:

14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. NIV

Forgiveness is the key to ridding your soul of what can eat away at you like cancer. As we grow older, the hurts and wounds can pile up and spread if we allow them to settle into our souls. We have the choice to become better or bitter as we walk through life and deal with these issues. It is incredibly important that we establish the habit of forgiving others as the Lord has forgiven us.

How can you “blow off steam”? Taking care of your spirit, soul and body is key to managing anger. Getting enough rest, eating properly, exercising, having fun, spending time with God in His Word and in prayer are all ways to maintain good health.

Our Canadian culture seems to teach us to be pacifists. In an effort to get us to be kind and tolerant toward everyone and everything, we are trying not to get worked up. There is a fine line between pacifism and apathy. While secular humanism ripples subtly through the hearts and minds of Canadians, we try to push God off the throne and claim authority for what and who is right and wrong. Anger flows out of our morals and values. It is time to renew our commitment to knowing the Lord, including knowing what makes Him angry.

So how should we deal with anger? Perhaps the biggest step toward managing our temper is acknowledging that we have one. The truth can set us free! It definitely helps to talk it through – with the Lord, with ourselves and with others who will not be hurt by our anger. It can be helpful to ask yourself some honest questions when you feel anger:

1. Am I angry?
2. Why do I feel this way?
3. Is this worth a response?
4. When and how should I respond?

You can actually harness the energy and adrenaline that comes with anger and let it motivate you in a positive direction. “Get steamed up” over issues that really matter.

We can see how horrible slavery is now, but imagine living in a previous era (www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/activists/william-wilberforce.html):

In the late 1700s, when William Wilberforce was a teenager, English traders raided the African coast on the Gulf of Guinea, captured between 35,000 and 50,000 Africans a year, shipped them across the Atlantic, and sold them into slavery. It was a profitable business that many powerful people had become dependent upon. One publicist for the West Indies trade wrote, "The impossibility of doing without slaves in the West Indies will always prevent this traffic being dropped. The necessity, the absolute necessity, then, of carrying it on, must, since there is no other, be its excuse."

By the late 1700s, the economics of slavery were so entrenched that only a handful of people thought anything could be done about it. That handful included William Wilberforce, who concluded, "So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the [slave] trade's wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be what they would: I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition."

Righteous anger motivated William Wilberforce to eradicate the injustice of slavery. The Lord continues to raise up people today to address other issues and to transform the world in which we live.

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