

How to Diffuse Emotional Bombs

At Every Man Ministries, we know men because we are men. We talk about real-life stuff. Tough stuff. Embarrassing stuff. Challenging stuff. We know the deal.

There's one issue that doesn't get much air time, but every man struggles with it to varying degrees. And every man probably deals with it differently. Once it's unleashed, chaos reigns. The enemy has fire to fuel, and he applies liberally. Relationships get torn while sin is born.

Anger.

Some men rage; others suppress. Some shout; others pout. Some get aggressive, others passive aggressive. Some men throw a fit; others get physically fit. Some men ignore it; others embrace it. But one thing is for sure: If you don't control anger, anger will control you. It's madness on the march, trampling anything in its path.

We would all agree that getting angry rarely solves anything. But Jesus explains the seriousness of it in Matthew 5:21. From the Message translation, check this out:

"You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder.

Anger fact: It seldom exists at the level at which you finally express or see it. It's deeper. God knows this, and He revealed where anger is birthed: in the heart and mind.

In Genesis 4:3-12, the Bible gives a case study on anger and its consequences. God was not pleased with Cain's offering, and it ticked Cain off. Why? Because Cain's offering did not

come from the heart; he was just going through the motions. Cain wasn't mad at God. He was mad at himself and jealous of his brother. Instead of taking his problem to God and being honest with himself, he loosed his anger and committed murder:

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Gen. 4:6-7, NIV).

In this passage, God says not to let anger master you. Do the right thing. If you don't—and here's the big warning—Satan capitalizes on the opportunity. It's much easier to lie to an angry man (and get him to do something he'll regret) than a man who has his emotions under control.

God says to Cain and to every man who will listen: "You must master your emotions." Easier said than done! But the key is getting right with God.

To get a grip on anger, first recognize there are—and will always be—a stimulus, a trigger and fuse. Then there's a reaction—that's the jumping-off point—followed by a consequence.

Fortunately, the Bible gives the math for dealing with anger:
Quick + Slow + Slow

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

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Conflict is inevitable; destruction is optional. You're not going to stop triggers that fuse bombs, but you don't have to light them. The goal is to stop reacting and start responding. When you feel the fire burning and the pot is about to boil

over, follow these steps:

1. Press pause. Don't escalate or retaliate. Fight for a pause. Agree to take a few minutes before responding. If you don't, the problem will get magnified. So between the stimulus and your response, distract yourself. Take out the trash. Do the dishes. Take a deep breath. In fact, take 10 of them. Count to 10 slowly. Settle down. When madness is on the march, you can slow that train down if you deal with it early, honestly and humbly.

2. Talk and walk. Just pray and say James 1:19. Saying Scripture is praying. Ask God for help, being honest with your feelings of frustration and weakness. Confession is a sign of strength! Walk in the Spirit by asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom and to guide your steps in the coming conversation. Think of God as your heavenly Father who is eager to give His advice and send help. You have to fight fire with fire, and the Holy Spirit is a holy fire.

3. Turn and take. Turn inward and take ownership of your part in the conflict. Understand God's desire in moments of disagreement. His desire is for us to seek and own the truth about ourselves. Are you willing to look at yourself, unlike Cain was? What's your part? When we own it, we diffuse it. The quickest way to douse the flame is to take responsibility for yourself and your own actions.

4. Discover the driver. In the process, between stimulus and response, you will discover something: The problem doesn't exist at the level you see it. It's just coming out as anger. The real issue, the deep-down driver, is probably related to pride. If you can put a lid on your pride, honestly ask God for His presence, and humbly submit to His Spirit, then you will find a desire to please God, not yourself. Remember to operate from a place filled with grace and truth. Then you can speak and respond to the situation.

5. Resolve to resolve. Now you're ready. But your intent must be to seek understanding, not squash it. Be quick to listen, not speak. Seek to please God instead of winning the fight. Resolve to resolve. Making peace may be easier than you think, and that's what will please God.

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin': Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:25-27).

God has a purpose in disagreement—to discover the real truth driving the emotion. Things, circumstances and other people may trigger anger, but they are not driving it.

Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and ChristianMingle advisory board member, provides biblically oriented teaching and leadership for men and pastors seeking relevant, timely material that battle cultural, worldly concepts threatening men and God's men. Follow Kenny and Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter (@everyMM) and YouTube.

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