

Why a Surprising Number of Christians Cling to This Destructive Addiction

Is anger eating you alive? I talk to many people who are angry. Most of the folks I deal with think they have found a good way to deal with their anger. They just eat it away. It really doesn't taste very good though.

I'm Angry Because

They are angry because something happened in their past. It made them angry, but as a child they couldn't do anything about it. It could have been being physically, sexually, emotionally or verbally abused by an adult. Maybe it was a parent leaving, whether by death or divorce.

It might have been something seemingly less traumatic like being ridiculed by their peers. Maybe it was not getting their way at some point in time. Whatever it was, they couldn't process it as a child, and it has stayed stuck in them, driving them into an emotional angst.

It Hurts

As a child, they really couldn't do anything about the pain. It made them angry that it happened, but the pain was still there. Pain must have an outlet. If left unattended, pain grows and leaves open wounds that fester and ooze. Wounds open the door for finding a way to placate the pain.

This eventually morphs into a habit, which becomes an addiction. The evil one is the king of addiction. It's his favorite tool to lead us to an early grave or to ineffectiveness in the Kingdom of God.

Habits Become Addictions

What is addiction? The dictionary says it is the fact or condition of being dependent on a particular substance, thing or activity. It is a habit. When that habit becomes a problem, we call it an addiction.

Gaining up to a 430-pound weight was a problem for me. It was leading me right to an early grave. I finally realized I was a sugar addict when I asked my mentor, who had just told his story about laying down alcohol, if there was such a thing as sugar addiction. At that point, I hadn't even heard the term. These days it's all over the news.

He said, "You can be addicted to anything that controls you." I knew foods with high sugar and carbohydrate content controlled me because I couldn't say no to them.

Eating those foods had become a habit I felt I couldn't break. They were my go-to source to assuage any anger I felt. To me, anger was bad, ungodly and unrighteous. So any anger I felt, I stuffed with food.

When Anger Is Good

I had to understand that anger does have its place when being used to right a wrong. Jesus taught us that when he drove the money changers from the temple in John 2:14-17. They were taking advantage by overcharging for sacrifices. Those who traveled long distances couldn't bring their sacrifices with them, so they paid dearly for them when they got to Jerusalem.

Jesus saw the situation at the temple like a three-ring circus. He righted the wrong by publicly throwing the thieves out of the temple.

Many people have anger that could be characterized as righteous. No one should abuse a child. How do we deal with that, though, when we become adults? The person who abused us, ridiculed us or left us is likely gone. We can't bring them to justice.

Forgive

Jesus gave us a great tool to use to help with anger. It's called forgiveness. He first outlined how to use it in what we refer to is the Lord's prayer. "Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us." (Matt. 6:12, NLT). The Amplified Bible translates the last phrase as "letting go of both the wrong and the resentment."

To do that simply state out loud to God, "I choose to forgive (the person who wronged me) for (whatever they did). I separate the sin from the sinner and nail it to the cross where I leave it in Your hands, God. And on the day of judgment I will not hold that wrong against the person. I release it to You."

Releasing the wrong to Jesus allows you to finally release the anger against that person and begin to live your life. You may have to do this more than once. As a coach once told me, "Forgiveness is a process. You do it until it is done."

When I find the anger rising up again, I simply hand the wrong and the resentment to Jesus once again. Some resentments I've had to hand over and over again until I finally let go. It's worth the effort, though, to be free of that baggage. We weren't designed to carry that kind of weight.

Boundaries

If the person is still in your life, you will need to establish good boundaries. If they cross them, then righting that wrong means they cannot have access to you until they keep your boundaries.

Getting out of the addictive cycle is impossible if you do not keep those boundaries. God can change negative people into positive ones. However, be in tune with the Spirit of God if they cross the boundaries again. Calmly and firmly tell them again what you request. If they continue to cross the boundary

you must disengage with them until they are willing to keep those boundaries. Make sure they are God-inspired boundaries before setting them.

Anger Fuels Habits

Anger fuels habits. Habits become addictions. Addictions, when allowed full reign, will eventually lead us to a death, whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual. Eating anger leads us nowhere but to an early grave.

God wants us to live. That's the real reason for forgiveness. The evil one's mission is to kill, steal and destroy your life. God wants you to enjoy life and have it in abundance, to the full until it overflows (see John 10:10).

Freely and Lightly

He wants you to live freely and lightly without the encumbrances of this world and all its cares and woes.

He says if you are tired, worn out, burned out to come to Him. "Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt. 11:28b-30 MSG).

We can't do that when we are constantly eating anger. It just won't feed us the way God can. {eoa}

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