

Second Tuesday
MANAGING YOUR MOODS
Session #3 Temper, Temper

Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman. Proverbs 21:19

What causes you to lose your temper? The big things or the little things?

Our temper is most often compared to flames of fire. We say tempers flare. Anger smolders in our hearts. We harbor burning wrath, seething emotions. People who lose their tempers are called hotheads or are said to have a short fuse. Anger barely contained is said to be boiling near the tip. And when we can't contain the anger any longer, we blow our top and sparks fly. In cartoons, we see the stages of building emotions. Shoulders hunch, fists clench, faces scrunch, teeth clench, color rises through the face, eyes become bloodshot, steam begins to escape through the ears, and then comes the explosion. There are lots of ways to give vent to anger. We grit our teeth, we give someone "the look." We pull our hair, we jump up and down, we say hateful things, we kick and scream, and we rant and rave. In any given household, there will be some combination of shouters, pouters, screamers, sulkers, snubbers, stompers, and sarcastics. Sounds like a soap opera or a sitcom, doesn't it?

By the time we hit kindergarten (give or take a year), most little people learn that temper tantrums are not acceptable. We urge them to exercise a little self-control. In order to stem the tide of fury, we are admonished to think before we speak, cool down, count to ten, and find healthy ways to express our frustration. But some of us never learn to control our tempers. It's one of the most unmanageable moods we face.

1. Anger unleashed almost always leads to feelings of regret. When we lose our temper, we often do and say things we wish we hadn't. We're far from alone in our struggles with our tempers. Many people in the Bible said words in the heat of the moment. Many of them behaved in ways they would later regret. Shall we take a look?

A. What did Moses do in a fit of anger in **Exodus 32:19**?

B. What was one man's perverse response in **Numbers 22:27**, just because he became frustrated and embarrassed?

C. What false accusation was made by an angry brother in **1 Samuel 17:28**?

D. What shocking insults were flung in a moment of fury in **1 Samuel 20:30**?

E. What rash promise did David make when he was stirred up, according to **2 Samuel 12:5**?

F. Who threw a temper tantrum in **Esther 1:12** when he didn't get his way?

G. We are all apt to say unwise things when upset. How does Jonah react to God's reasonable question in **Jonah 4:9**?

Sheila Walsh: *So many people walk through life with regret. That seems like such a wasted, draining emotion to me. We are not powerless in our lives to make change, to start over again, to learn to do better next time.*

2. What does **Proverbs 14:29** tell us about people who cannot control their tempers?

3. How does **Proverbs 29:22** characterize an angry man or woman?

4. I once read your life is in the hands of any fool who can make you lose your temper. Read **Ecclesiastes 7:9**. What does Solomon call a person who is easily angered?

Have you ever stopped to think about why we get angry? What's at the root of our basic temper tantrums?

It's easiest to discern the heart of the matter with children. They pitch a fit when they want something and we tell them "no." They set up a howl when it's time to go home, because they'd rather continue having fun. They use angry words when they want their own way. Selfishness is at the root of their targeted tirades.

Are we so different? We get angry when we are inconvenienced. We get upset when we are disappointed, frustrated, and impatient. We lose our temper when people disobey us (When we don't get our own way). Some of us get into the habit of anger because we've learned it's the fastest way to get what we want. We've learned it's a handy tool, because many people will relent just to appease us. We're still losing our temper for entirely selfish reasons, even though we're adults.

Thelma Wells: *Think of the times you become angry or out of control. What's happening? Do you feel safe and secure? Do you feel competent and confident? Do you have faith that God is in perfect control of your life? I don't think so.*

5. Okay, that's all pretty clear. Losing our temper is a bad thing, and we should not let anger control us. Any advice on how that is done? Take a look at these three verses—what word is used for dealing with anger in each?

Psalm 37:8 _____

Ephesians 4:31 _____

Colossians 3:8 _____

6. So does that mean we can *never* be angry—that all anger is a sin? Well no, but let's look at what **Psalm 4:4** says?

7. Is it possible to say, "I will never be angry again." We need to set a realistic goal for ourselves. In **Nehemiah 9:17**, one of God's character traits is being "slow to anger." That's the ticket. What does **Proverbs 16:32** consider praiseworthy?

Marilyn Meberg: *Many Christians believe anger is an ungodly and unsanctified emotion and must never be felt, much less expressed. Yet Paul said in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and sin not". We do not sin when we feel anger, we sin when we express it inappropriately.*

TRINKET TO TREASURE: At the close of each session, a gift will be placed in your hand to serve as a reminder of the things we have learned through scripture and our time together. It will be a small token to keep us from forgetting the faith journey we are traveling.

Closing prayer together: Heavenly Father, we have reflected on the moods and emotions of our lives. Our anger is not difficult to spot but sometimes it's hard for us to let go. We don't want to do things we regret so we ask your help as we deal with any anger in our hearts. Make us more like you, slow to anger and full of mercy. This we pray in your holy name. Amen