

Anger Management for Law Enforcement

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Anger - What is happening?

Anger is a common thing to all people, even though some do a better job than others at handling anger. The fact is everyone gets mad at some time or another. Sometimes anger is very justified and a good thing, and because of it we are moved to action. But when anger is not dealt with in a proper and safe way, it can become uncontrolled and even deadly. Anger is a basic reaction of every person to actions, situations, or developments that occur in life that are perceived as a threat, which is the cause of discomfort, harm, or damage in some form to an individual. People can become angry at other people, animals, nature, situations, developments, and even at God.

While anger is common to all people, some people do not seem to get angry as often or with the same level or depth of anger as others. The amount of anger that a person has is somewhat dependent on how many issues occur in a person's life to make them become angry. People who are exposed to difficult and stressful situations are, of course, going to be more exposed to anger stimuli.

In many ways, anger been neglected and ignored by the psychological and psychiatric professional community. The reason is that anger is a common emotion and everyone is expected to have a response of anger when they have been harmed. Anger is not seen totally as a negative emotion, and when anger moves a person

with good results it can even be seen as noble or manly. John Rate, a well-known psychiatric writer, wrote it this way:

Anger as an emotion is often what psychiatrists call ego-syntonic: it is an expected, and acceptable, part of the way to feel. Anger, in short, is a descriptor of the self people do not mind having. Depression we reject: “I’m depressed” is neither a good way to feel, nor a good thing to say about ourselves. But “I am angry” sounds strong, righteous, justified.¹

So people who are angry are not looked at being in the wrong or doing something bad. In fact, the Christian church holds Jesus Christ up as “without sin”² and it plainly says in the book of Mark³ that Jesus was angry with the Pharisees because of the hardness of their hearts. Also the event of Jesus clearing the temple is often sited as Jesus having anger at the money-changers who have turned the temple into a den of thieves. While the scripture does not say specifically that Jesus was angry, his actions seem to reveal that he was, in fact, very angry.⁴ The emotion of anger is very human. Jesus was the God man and experienced all the same emotions and temptations that every other human being

¹ John J. Ratey M.D., and Catherine Johnson, Ph. D., *Shadow Syndromes*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1997. Pg 144.

² Hebrews 4:15

³ Mark 3:5

⁴ Matthew 21:12-13

has in common. So it is easy to conclude that while Jesus did get angry, he had the perfect anger management control.

Anger control and management is what this work is all about. This work is written to a very specific group of people who can and do have some control or they would not be able to do the work that they do in law enforcement. What is effective in control of anger? What should be the response of someone who gets angry? When and how should a person display anger? Do the answers to these questions vary from person to person or situation to situation? Is there a certain amount of relativism that is acceptable for anger control? Meaning that the amount of anger a person can display is relative to the offense. This would be the response of most people. A toleration of an outburst of anger based on the given situation is, in many ways, a sort of relativism that looks at each situation based on what is going on and what is happening to people who are in that particular situation. This can be traced back to some of the ancient Sophist philosophy thought processes of early Greek philosophers. So some questions are inevitable when dealing with anger. Where is the limit on anger? How angry should we be when we are wronged and how should we respond? What should we do when someone we know is angry? What is God looking at and thinking about us when we become angry? Is it okay based on the situation to be angrier at some situations than at other situations?

Do we need an anger meter or a measure of anger so that we know where the limits are?

With all of these questions and many others that you would likely think of about the issue of anger, it seems that a good study on anger is important. This is especially true for anyone who is in a stressful situation, but it's even more important if someone is a person who would call himself or herself a Christian. This examination or questioning of limits of anger is more the anger management style of the later Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. They were opponents of the style of the Sophist and critics of both their style of teaching and acceptance of relativistic thinking. Of course, they developed the Socratic method that will ask all the questions of why, how, what, and when, which has had great influence on Western thinking and ultimately the handling of anger.

This study is unique in two ways. First, it is not based on any philosophy or teaching other than what is found in the 66 books of the Holy Bible. It is mindful of both philosophical thought and religious thought, but only mindful to give it consideration as to why thought processes about anger might have their origin. The control of anger is mandated in the Scripture,⁵ but not always by direct commands

⁵ Ephesians 4:26

relating to anger but by instruction in the way of living of those who have a fundamental belief in a loving Creator God.

If a person is a believer in Jesus Christ as Lord of all, then neither the relativism of the Sophist nor the endless seeking of answers by the Stoic will be sufficient for an anger management system.. The only hope is in the absolute truths of the Word of God. When a man has come to believe in the Bible with all of his heart, the truths of Scripture should be sought first for any area of life that might be a problem. The truth is many people do have problems handling anger. If the person has faith in God and believes the Bible is the source of authority for their faith, there is no other place to turn. Even though unknown by many people, even those who do have faith, these truths are what this study will seek to use as a solution to anger management. When learned and applied to anger management, Biblical solutions will bring a control not achievable by any man-made philosophy. However ,it must be stated at the onset that a Biblical Anger Management System (BAMS) will be much more than just a set of rules or a list of things a person can do to help control anger. The person of faith cannot be separated from his faith by a job or a single act of another person that might cause anger. A person of true

faith has become a new person in Christ⁶ and should be conforming to the image of Jesus Christ in all that they do in life.⁷

The second unique way that this study is different is that it is designed and focused on law enforcement officers. The fact is officers are exposed to far more anger-producing stimuli than the average person, yet they operate in a world where they are by necessity not allowed to display that anger. They train to hold all emotions, especially anger, in check and keep a sense of control and authority in all situations they encounter.

The fact is police officers must keep their emotions in check while on the job, even in the most difficult of situations. They are trained and practiced in this discipline, and most are very good at keeping a lid on the emotions while on duty. But anger at situations can build within an individual. Over a period of weeks and years anger can become resentment and the resentment is seen in the cynical attitudes of many veteran police officers. Coping mechanisms of officers can become unhealthy and dangerous to themselves and other officers.

Therefore, this study is both Bible-based and specific to law enforcement. While the average person may be able to gain some understanding of the absolute truths of the teaching of Scripture through this study, the intent is for law

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁷ Philippians 2:1-7

enforcement personnel. Likewise, a person who would not consider himself a Christian may still gain great benefit by understanding the basis for the thought process and giving mental assent to the validity of the Bible as a philosophical work of teaching that has had a tremendous influence on the history of the world. But it should be clear that this study will be most effective for individuals who have made a commitment to God to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord and have sought the forgiveness of sin in their own lives. Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament will be cited in this study as well as taking a look at the lives of many individuals in the Bible. One of the most important points of perspective that this study assumes is that a person who has faith in God calling themselves Christian should not and in reality cannot separate their emotions from their actions. They will therefore think and act as a result of all the teaching and training they receive in all areas of life including physical, academic, emotional, and spiritual. It is the opinion of this author that the bedrock for regulation of all emotions, including anger, must be tied directly to the bedrock of the absolute truths that are found in the Bible.

What happens when we get angry?

Anger is a feeling or a mental attitude that comes into the conscious being of a person. It is an emotional state that people experience. When a person is angry, they do have physical manifestations of the anger. A person will usually have facial expressions that change. They will have squinted eyes and lips that are tightly clinched. The muscles all over the person's body will tighten up, and they will become very alert. The anger also causes a reaction in the brain. There is rush of neuron transmitters in the Medulla of the brain, and this releases adrenalin into the blood stream telling the major muscles to fill with blood and the heart immediately pumps faster to accomplish this task. Breathing becomes shallow and a person will focus on the object of the source of the anger and decisions will quickly be made.

Fight or flight is the decision to be made. A person will evaluate the environment, the opponent, the depth of the offense, the opportunity to respond, and all of this happens very quickly. Some may elect to defer anger and others choose to express anger right then and there. The way the anger is responded to will set the stage for the next time there is anger. The whole process of anger and responding has been going on in us since we were infants. When we were little and got angry, our mothers responded and we began to learn when it was good to

respond with a loud cry or maybe it would be better to curb our anger. Our mothers taught us a lot.

As we grew older and, as children do, we had circumstances to become angry at our playmates, and we responded by experimenting with different ways to display our displeasure trying to get our way. Sometimes this worked and sometimes we were met with an angry mom or dad when we displayed too much anger. Nevertheless we progressed in our early anger management plan. As a young teen we soon learned that others would sometimes belittle or make fun of us if they were able to make us angry. If we “slipped” and let them know that had made us mad, there would be no end to the teasing that would come from peers, family members, and co-workers. So we learned to suppress anger sometimes, knowing that it was in our best interest not to say anything.

What would be the carryover here from these experiences? Would we remember these incidents and make future decisions regarding a situation like this, and, very importantly, remember the people who made us angry? Very likely we will. The depth of the anger will drive us to actions either good or bad because of past actions. So anger management is learned behavioral response to situations that cause anger in our lives.

How do we describe anger? How do we classify anger? How do we react to anger? These are questions that we all need to deal with or the anger that will come

into our lives from time to time. If inappropriate, our responses will cause great embarrassment and pain. If they are appropriate and sufficient to express our anger in any given situation, they will give a sense of catharsis to help remediate our anger.

We have already stated that it is okay to get mad sometimes. We all do. In the course of things, we have moments where a very natural reaction to circumstances and events causes us to become angry. Anger is a natural emotion that all people experience on a regular if not daily basis. So how do we limit the amount of expression but yet express ourselves within the limits of proper and improper? What are the limits of proper and improper?

Let's go one step further and ask a simple question. Is it good to get mad? This is one of those rhetorical questions that you can give a short answer to, but then spend a lot of time clarifying and qualifying the statement. So the short answer is yes, it is good to get mad or angry sometimes, but the reality is how do we deal with the anger when it comes. The Bible says, "BE ANGRY, AND YET DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger (Ephesians 4:26 NASB). So the Scripture says we can be angry, but obviously it should be short-lived. It is not an emotion that is okay to keep us motivated or committed to anything.

Many people have used an expression like, “I don’t get mad, I just get even.”

While a thought whereby someone might control an outburst of anger, this statement it is neither biblical nor productive for a person to stay in a right relationship with God. It puts self at the core your purpose and function and leads to a very possible path of destruction.

What happens when you get angry? There is a huge amount of physical reaction as well as mental or emotional stress that occurs when anger is present in a person. The amount of anger a person experiences varies with every situation and even more varied are the reactions that people have to their anger. These two facts will be important as we consider how and what role anger plays in the work and life of a police officer. This discourse is about anger management. As we start into the work of anger management, we need to be aware of the fact that each of us individually presently have an anger management process we use daily. It either works well or maybe sometimes not so well. But it is the process we use every day in dealing with anger. Every person in the development of a Biblical Anger Management System begins with the system they are currently using. So the things that have worked for anger management must be considered and modified by the simple truths contained in the Bible.

All through history we know of stories where anger played an important role in the outcome of a situation. In the Bible, the very first reported anger results in a

case of domestic violence, which led to a homicide. Abel was just minding his own business tending his flocks but Cain's jealousy and selfish sacrifice practices led to the Lord's rebuke. Seething inside, anger overtook Cain's sense of right and wrong, and he killed his brother. It is easy to see that his anger was out of control. It is very noteworthy to see that the question the Lord ask Cain in Genesis 4:6, "Then the LORD said to Cain, Why are you angry?"⁸ In the Lord's question, we find the first ever use of anger management. The search for the source of the anger is what the Lord instructed Cain to look for.

The fact that anger management has been around a long time is important. As we mentioned earlier, there have been many philosophers who also discussed anger and how to control it. The Greeks were known for their great thinking and philosophical works. Looking again to these Ancient Greek philosophers to get some thoughts about anger management, there were two distinctive points of view, the Sophist and the Stoic.

The Sophist was eclectic in really all that they did and felt that every situation had its own distinct conditions. Therefore what happened in one situation might not be right in another, but it was always best to look at the circumstances. There is a great amount of what would seem to be common sense in the idea of

⁸ Genesis 4:6

each situation standing on its own. For example, if you tell a three-year-old child to put away things in their room and they do not, should you be angry? If you tell a thirteen-year-old son to put away things in their room and they do not, should you be angry? If you have the same scenario with a thirty-year-old spouse who will not put things away, should you be angry? The cause of the anger is somewhat the same, although we can assume the things not put away would be different for a toddler, and a teen, and an adult. The amount of frustration causing the anger would certainly vary with how much instruction had been given about the offense. At our first glance, it might seem that the Sophist has a point that each situation stands on its own merits as to how much anger will be generated.

The Stoic would have to ask questions about each scenario and inquire as to the amount of instruction and the need for cleanliness of the room at this particular time. There would also be the inquiry into other responsibilities of the teen and the adult for sure as to homework or job schedule or even other task or duties around the house. In reality, the Stoic would say the three scenarios are entirely different because of the ages. So each arrives at a similar response that the anger generated by each of these violators of clean room standards would get a different amount of wrath from the one who actually does the cleaning.

Here may be a good place to introduce yet another philosopher who had a good bit to write about anger management. It seems that the philosopher, Seneca,

who was a Roman and lived about the same time as Jesus knew that anger could be a problem so he wrote a good deal about how to master anger.

Seneca addresses the question of mastering anger in three parts:

1. How to avoid becoming angry in the first place
2. How to cease being angry and
3. How to deal with anger in others.⁹

Seneca began to systematically order thoughts on anger and developed a full system of control of anger. Yet even his system is not without preconceived ideas. Seneca felt that anger had no use whatever. This comes from the heavy influence of Stoic philosophical thought process that all things are predetermined, and there is little any human can do to change it. This was the thought of many of the Greeks, but the Romans, like Seneca, changed slightly. A modern web site advocating the use of stoic philosophy gives us insight into why. Jason Cooper writes about Seneca's anger management system. "Its later Roman form advocated the **calm acceptance of all occurrences** as the unavoidable result of divine will or of the natural order."¹⁰

⁹ Anger, "*Philosophical perspectives*," Wikipedia, January 24, 2011, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anger#Passive_anger>.

¹⁰ Jason Cooper, *Use Stoic Philosophy To Learn Self Help Anger Management – Part 2*, Sept 23, 2009.

The thought is that all things are predetermined by divine providence, and there is no reason to be angry with the gods. Jason Cooper advocates the use of Stoic philosophy to control anger. But yet he admits it is somewhat ineffective.

Cooper writes,

You must learn to control anger and not let anger control you. You are creator and master of this negative emotion, which should give you the power alone to throw anger into the dungeons of obscurity, never again for it to attempt usurping your kingly position of contentedness and equanimity in your life. Lastly, one should try to be stoic in attitude and application to attain a temperament of a saint – something which, I admit, is perhaps impossible in this stress filled world. Worth a try anyway.¹¹

Cooper is correct - the world is stress-filled, and the world of law enforcement has far more than the average person encounters daily. Cooper, however, is not correct in the use of the stoic philosophy as the best anger management system. Learning to control anger by attempting to master emotions will fail due to a faulty assumption by Cooper. He states, “you are the creator ... of this emotion.” In one sense, he is correct - anger is generated inside a person; however, it is caused by outside uncontrollable stimuli. The stoic may want to be indifferent and unaffected

<http://www.knowledgereform.com/2009/09/23/use-stoic-philosophy-to-learn-self-help-anger-management-part-2/>.

¹¹ Ibid.

by the world in which they live, but the result of trying to be unaffected will lead to storing and building of anger that can have disastrous results.

The relativism of the Sophist will also fail in giving an adequate structure to anger management as the eclectic philosophy would allow for the more severe the offense to have a more dramatic response and this does not seem to be lining up with biblical principles that Jesus taught, like: “But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.”¹² No, it seems to be arbitrary with anger would not be a valid system of anger management but would be a system of retaliation to allow responses to be scaled according to the taste of the offended.

It is the task of this study to develop a Biblical Anger Management System, which we will label BAMS for short, and in this system see if there are biblical principles that can guide law enforcement personnel in the ever-present task of managing the many stresses and heart aches they experience in life, some of which are particular to their profession. Before these ideas are developed, there is need to look at the way most people do respond to anger. The next section will look at the common responses of people when they are angry and discuss some common avenues used by everyone to attempt to structure a method of controlling anger.

¹² Matthew 5:39

Common Ways People Cope With Anger

Anger is common to everyone and every person develops ways that they deal with anger. Anger must be dealt with and it is very important to learn what is the proper way to express anger. “I had to count to ten,” is something that many have heard people say as a person expresses themselves about someone or something making them angry. Another person might say, “I had to bite my tongue.” Both of these are examples of the number one way that people cope with anger. The absolute number one solution for anger is talking about it. Expression of anger to a friend, a coworker, even a complete stranger can be a way of dealing with the emotions, but is it always the best way? The clear path from the strong feeling of anger to resolution of anger is so often going to include verbal expression of anger and everyone has his or her own ways of doing this.

However, talking about anger is not always sufficient for the amount of anger. The build up of anger can even be enriched by the fact that anger is reoccurring. When the offender or situation is reoccurring and there has been an expression of anger in the past directed at a similar, if not identical, cause of the anger, then the anger will be increased due to the fact that the anger expression of the past was not sufficient to prohibit the same source of anger reoccurring. Here expressions of “I told you before...” will be used to express the anger so that a person realizes that this is a reoccurring problem.

The way that people respond to anger can generally be classified two ways. They either have an active or a passive response to anger. The active reactions to anger are the ones that are seen and heard by others. Another way of reacting to anger is to do nothing. It is the Sergeant Shultz (Hogan's Heroes) way of anger management. I know nothing, I see nothing, I do nothing. All this might be fine for the people who are bystanders, but is it healthy to take no action when something makes you angry?

The first look then to anger management is to realize that the anger of some people you see or hear and others you do not. The reality is also the active or passive reaction has much more to do with the person than it does with the intensity of the cause of the anger.

Active Reactions to Anger

If a person is having an active reaction to anger, it just basically means that the person is doing something. That something can vary a lot depending on the individual. The reality is a person can have an active reaction that is aggressive and combative toward the anger, or a person can have a reaction that is not aggressive but nonetheless is an active reaction even though it may be more subdued. We will discuss the Active Aggressive actions first.

The most common of all aggressive actions with anger is raising the voice and getting intense and dogmatic about the issue. This will often be perceived as anger even if it is simple passion about the subject or issue. If someone is shouting, this is sometimes a reason to listen and give high priority to the message that the person may be shouting. However, a person shouting at a baseball game is largely unnoticed and ignored as just part of the crowd. That is, they will be unnoticed if they are shouting things about the baseball game amid the crowd which has many others shouting also. However if they shout an urgent message like, "Help, there is a sick person here, make way give us some help here!" more than likely they will be heard even about the roar of the crowd as having an urgent message. Or the person in the crowd may become angry at an obnoxious person near them and begin to shout at a person instead of the ballgame, and very quickly the actions are noticed and the anger is noted. If anger is not cooled and a remedy reached to the situation, it could escalate and, even in a crowded ball park with many people shouting, the manner and words of the shout make a big difference as to the attention that people in close proximity will be affected by the shouts. So we can realize that it is not always the place or the person who is shouting but, while these are important factors, it also matters to great degree what words are being communicated in an elevated or strong voice.

A pastor in the pulpit of his church may be shouting also. He may raise his voice to make a very dramatic point during the middle of his sermon, and the congregation sits glazed eyes even though a man is shouting at them. No offense is taken as the pastor barks out the sermon in a passionate and elevated voice. However, if the pastor says something about a particular point that seems very personal to a person listening in the congregation, suddenly emotions can be stirred within an individual, and they may think he is speaking to them about the issue.

A second way of showing aggressive anger may be in conjunction with this idea of a raised voice or could be in a controlled voice using profanity or strong language. A person who would not have profanity as a regular part of their conversation can use profanity in a calmer voice when very angry and this may leave a huge impression.

I remember as a young boy about eight years old being at a friend's house. His mother was a sweet seeming lady who I had never had any particular fear of for any reason. We were in the kitchen, and my friend's older sister dropped a dish, breaking it in the process. My friend's mother said the words, "God damn." I was shocked, and it changed the way I viewed this woman. She did not raise her voice at all, but the anger was obvious. I thought that this woman was sweet and loving, but with the use of those two words, it changed my perspective of her even some 47 years later. Words do matter and the choice of words in anger is very important.

A third way that anger causes a very active reaction is when a person is angry and the anger caused them to flee. People will sometimes run away when they get angry. Often people will make a statement like, “I had to get out of there before I said or did something that I would be sorry for later. I remember another occasion when this happened to me. I was working as an electrician while attending seminary. I very much enjoyed the work and the environment that I was able to work in daily. One day I received a work order for one of the many apartments that were located on campus. It seems there was an electrical outlet not working. I went with another worker to see if we could make repairs. The occupant of the apartment was not at home, but we were authorized to enter with master keys to make repairs that residents had called in to the administration. Going to the outlet described on the work order, I needed to move some things stacked against the wall to gain access to remove the outlet from the wall. In moving the stacks of material, I realized that these were pornographic magazines that were designed for gay men. I was shocked as I realized the impact of this seminary student’s orientation. The teaching and belief of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary did not condone nor approve of homosexuality. I was even more shocked as there was a book bag that had these words embroidered on the side, “Be Kind to Me I Minister to Children.” Anger arose in my mind and heart that could have caused me to damage the apartment or, if he had walked in, incited me to do physical

harm to the individual who was the owner of these items. I told the co-worker, “Let’s get out of here.” I think his anger was equal to mine. and it took a minute or two for us to calm down when we returned to our service truck. But there was little doubt after thinking the situation through that we must report this to our supervisor and to the administration, which we did. It was a case where leaving was the best answer. But this may not be the case in every situation.

Another way that is a very common active reaction to anger is resistance. This is very common in the family setting. Children who get angry with parents about being forced to do things are very often resist the parents. If they are instructed to take the trash out, they do not say no, but they move ever so slowly. They will do the job but doing only the minimum what must be done. For example, they may not replace the garbage bag, or leave the lid off the outside trash can, or even intentionally not pick up a small piece of dropped trash. They seem to have a sort of victory by their small but covert action of rebellion or resistance.

Pouting is also a form of resistance. When people get angry, they will often pout. They will give the silent treatment for long periods of time in order to punish an offender who has made them angry. Communication may not be cut off all together, but it is dramatically reduced to short, direct phrases with no emotion or emphasis in any way. The idea conveyed by the talk is only one of functionality. The idea of friendliness or concern or care for the other person is dropped

completely from the spoken words. Isolation and inattention to others will be the display of the person who is pouting.

And finally, an additional way do something directly toward the cause of a person's anger is to plan revenge. This type of response to anger seems very sinister, and is often covert in its methodology. A person may plan to take action against someone or something, and they will, of course, have the advantage of surprise of time, place, and method of extracting their revenge. For some, this is a tool to cope with anger that gives a source of great hope and contentment in the face of anger that builds inside because of ongoing abuse or ridicule. Anger is soothed with a plan to one day set the record even again. This type of anger can be all across the scope of possible actions. The revenge may be as simple as a plan to embarrass the person in front of others or as sinister as murder. While most will never go to the extent of murder, there are some who gain satisfaction for this type of subversive anger management.

Passive Reactions to Anger

Some people have very strong abilities to suppress anger. They can be offended and become very angry, but yet there will never even be as much as a facial expression to let anyone else know that they are angry. The suppression of anger is, therefore, a very passive and common reaction to anger. Holding in all

feelings and having no outward sign of anger can be very dangerous, many of the world's psychologists warn.

A second way to respond passively is to get involved in something else other than reacting to the anger. Excessive work is the outlet that many people will use to not show emotion and to deal with the strong and difficult emotions of anger. More production, more quality, these thoughts, while productive for any business or entity have a motivation which is questionable, and wise employers will watch for signs from employees of passive anger causing an employee to work longer and harder than anyone else.

A third way that people deal with anger is exercise. Running, lifting weights, swimming, boxing, and any other very physical and demanding way to be able to work off energy can help stress levels and will seem to also alleviate anger. No doubt exercise is good for people physically and emotionally, but does it really dispel and rid a person of anger or just mask the anger with the accomplishments of the work out and allow a sufficient diversion in order to suppress the anger?

A fourth and fifth way of dealing with anger have many similarities in the way they work but are essentially different for several reasons. Medications or drugs and alcohol are technically both drugs, but alcohol is also socially acceptable for just the sake of drinking. Medications should be supervised by a physician, which would mean it would be hard to overtake without intentionally doing so. If a

person is using illegal drugs to cover or deal with anger issues, the mere fact that they are illegal could be setting up a person for catastrophe. The use of drugs both legal and illegal, and alcohol consumption for anger management are far more likely in a person who has anger that is constantly being suppressed. When pressure from the anger is building, the individual could indulge in the use of these to numb the pain of the emotions.

One additional way that is considered passive but has very active symptoms is the transference of anger to another. This is very difficult for an individual to see about himself or herself if they are transferring anger from one area of their lives to others. Typically, what may be seen is someone who has a difficulty in their job situation who will take out the anger caused by frustration on family members or co-workers.

Anger – What are the causes?

Although anger is common to all people, people do not get angry about the same things. The Bible says that one evidence of a life that has been changed by the power of God is the display of the “fruits of the Spirit.” One of these “fruits” is a word that is in many ways the opposite of anger, patience.¹³ A theme very often repeated in the epistles of the Apostle Paul is reminding readers that they should

¹³ Galatians 5:22

have patience. Paul writes, “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”¹⁴ But this is not always easy to do. A big part of a BAMS is developing an understanding that all people are imperfect and that they are going to make mistakes. The Bible says, “There is none righteous, not even one.”¹⁵ Sometimes the mistakes others make are innocent and unintentional, and sometimes the mistakes are very intentional. When the act is intentional, most people would not call the offense a mistake. God designed people to live in a perfect world, yet that perfect world went down the drain a very long time ago. Now we all live in a world where there are no perfect people, so we are all people who make mistakes. One mistake teaches someone else to make a similar mistake. We teach selfishness, greed, lust, hatred, and vice to people through our actions, entertainment, and media. It is not hard to learn how to be sinful. But this is not what God intended for people. So what causes anger? The fact is that we are all missing the mark God had for mankind. We are people in a world that is full of mistakes, intentional and unintentional. As people, we have a much harder time with the intentional things that cause us discomfort or angst, so much so that we feel the response of anger over events that are intentional and we find offensive. Anger is a result of the mess mankind is in because of a messed up

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:14

¹⁵ Romans 3:10

world that was never God's plan. Anger causes are varied from small, seemingly trivial things to the most radical and fundamental points of view on life itself.

A very typical thing that people get angry about is other people driving. Road rage is very common and all of us have ridden with someone who drives like a demon. It may seem they feel there is great merit in getting ahead of the car in front of them no matter what the speed limit is or how many other cars there are on the road. From time to time, every police officer deals with road rage in the public and in themselves. This is especially true when officers have to deal with people who do not know how to drive and cause accidents or do not know how to get out of the way of an emergency vehicle.

In addition to road rage, there are as many different reasons to get angry as there are people. For the purpose of this study, we are going to put all the things that will make you or any police officer angry into one of three categories. While everything that makes you angry may not fit perfectly in one of these categories, at the root of the issue there is likely a link to one of the three. The three categories are fear, frustration, and failure. We will explore all three here to help you identify what might be some things that are lighting a fuse within you that, with careful thought and some simple biblical principles applied, could be extinguished. The identification of anger is a key to understanding and control of anger.

Three Causes of Anger in Law Enforcement

There are any numbers of things that can make police officers angry. Some of them are in the category of reoccurring items. Two of the most common things that officers have shared with this author are first “stupid people” and second “lying people.” Both of these seem to be common occurrences for officers as they sort through the messes people make in day to day living.

Even though it may not be the same individual that causes the anger in the officer, the anger is caused by a similar pattern in people who all seem to make the same mistakes. An officer can easily forget there has not been a warning to an individual that they would incur the officer’s anger if they commit one of these common mistakes. What are the common mistakes? Speeding, reckless driving because of a cell phone, abuse of alcohol, desperate ways to attempt to get money, or get away from the stress of society through drug use. They are also selfishness, greed, lust, and pride. In other words, the officer sees the worst of people as many of the mistakes are not only violations of what God intended but violations of the law as man has seen fit to pass to protect society from the dark side of mankind. The ignorance of the law is no excuse, and officers hear this excuse all the time from people who claim they did not know the speed limit, to I did not know he had that in his pocket, to I did not know that there was a warrant out for my arrest. People plead ignorance so often that the officers do think many people are very

ignorant. People do and say things under pressure that they would not ordinarily do. They may argue with an officer about something that they have little or no knowledge of, which is a bad mistake on their part. This can be very frustrating to an officer in dealing with a situation when well-meaning people want to get involved, and they have no knowledge of the situation. Second, while lying to a police officer is second nature for a hardened criminal, the average citizen will also too often be quick to do so if they are the ones who are going to admit guilt by telling the truth. The officer will usually have several people a day tell a lie to their face and so officers become skeptical about almost every person they question.

Case Study One

Officer Sam Jones is running a little late for the squad meeting and is not in the greatest of moods. His wife, Ellen, just told him that her parents were expecting them for dinner tomorrow night at 7 pm and that they should be back in plenty of time for him to report for duty at

10 pm. But Sam had planned to watch the football game on TV tomorrow afternoon and with the game starting at 4 pm and so it would be right at the final moments when they need to leave to go visit the in-laws. How could she be so inconsiderate? This led to a discussion about the in-laws, and it was less than satisfying to both Sam and Ellen when they were through with the exchange. Sam enters the squad room with only a minute to spare, as the Sergeant is right behind him.

Discussions

Is Sam angry? What is making him angry? Are there underlying factors?

How does being a police officer complicate this situation?

When these two realities of “stupid people” and “lying people” are coupled with the average day of a police officer, stress is inevitable. The shift work, paramilitary environment, the danger of the job, and the reality of life and death situations are all factors that add to the stress of the work of law enforcement.

No doubt you can relate to Officer Jones in some aspect of this very simple story. The problems of communication, scheduling family gatherings, and being a

part of a family all are themes that every person deals with day in and day out. The plight of Officer Jones is, however, more complicated than that of the average person. We will pick up the adventures of Officer Jones for a second look at his anger level about an hour after squad meeting.

Case Study Part Two

Sam Jones is dispatched to a call in a home on the nice side of town. The home is a large estate with several nice cars parked in the driveway. The call is a 911 hang up with the dispatcher stating that yelling was heard in the background, and there is no answer on callback. As Sam and his beat partner approach the home there are several beer cans sitting on the front porch, and they can hear loud voices in the home. When they knock on the door, a small boy answers the door and says, “Mommy and daddy are yelling. Please make them stop.” He can hear loud voices in the rear of the home. Sam enters and bellows, “Police Department.” The officers enter through the hall and into the kitchen where they find two adults sitting at a table, and the woman screams and proclaims, “What right do you have to enter my home?”

How does what has happened earlier in the evening affect Sam?

What are Fears of Police?

While it goes without saying that law enforcement officers, by the nature of their job, are people with a lot of courage. I have seen officers bravely stand up to people twice their size and never flinch. As a routine, officers clear buildings with open doors albeit with guns drawn but looking around each corner with care,

knowing that the barrel of a gun may be the next thing that they see. The reality is all people have some things that they fear. Charles Stanley recently said in a sermon that, “Courage is not the absence of fear but the presence of a steadfast and calm spirit in the midst of fear.” The reality of this comes home each day for a police officer who has trained and is ready in any and all situations to handle the world as it unfolds on duty. There are six things we have listed that officers share in common. Some have little fear of these, but others have great struggles with them. All of them overcome these fears daily.

Death – While the public thinks that a police officer faces death every day, this is not the case. What they do face is the potential for a deadly situation. It is this potential that makes police officers people who are very much in control of every situation, and there is not a quicker way to anger a police officer than to not comply with his or her commands as they are issued when they respond to a situation or make a traffic stop. It is not that they are expecting to die any day and know that most officers do make retirement, but it is the reality that if they do not watch out and keep up their guard in every situation, any situation could turn deadly in a moment’s notice.

Injury – Getting hurt on the job is very likely for law enforcement at some time in their career. The job is physical. It involves handling people who may resist or flee or both. This could mean a chase and a struggle. No other profession except

a prizefighter or soldier would pay someone to engage in a fight. Involvement in an automobile accident is much higher for police officers who spend eight hours on the road every day. Law enforcement officers have to stop on the side of roads where traffic is heavy and or people may not be able to see the best. They are there to save lives but too often can become victims of poor drivers who do not see or do not know how to react to an emergency vehicle. This lack of poor judgment and poor driving skills could lead to officer death but more often leads to permanent injury to officers.

Incompetence – Experience helps officers to overcome this fear, but nonetheless it is real. No matter how long they are on the job, they can still make a mistake. Often the mistake will go unnoticed by supervisors or even their peers, but the reality is the officer will know if he has made a mistake that might result in a guilty party going free. Sometimes the mistakes can become public, and they bear the shame of everyone knowing they have made the error and the criticism and ridicule that will accompany such mistakes. If it is too severe it can result in formal reprimand, suspension, or even termination. It is really not a matter of “if” an officer would make a mistake, but really a matter of “when.” And the second question is, how many mistakes. Almost every officer I know will be angry at least at himself or herself for any mistake.

Insult – All police officers have been insulted at some time or another. An angry citizen who gets a ticket will use language that can make a drill sergeant blush. Venting people in a domestic argument are ready to kill each other until the police officer makes an arrest, then the injured spouse can turn on a dime and tell an officer very vivid and colorful history about their ancestry. Every officer also knows how the strong language and jabs of their fellow officers are always strong and to the point, and when they hit the truth or find weakness, too often there are officers who do not know when to back off. The public will also insult the officer with lies and false stories so far fetched that they make Grimm’s fairy tales look like stark reality.

Ignorance – The law is constantly changing, and new ordinances from the county and state laws are enacted regularly. Federal law is sometimes mysterious and elusive in its range and scope. There is an old saying, “Ignorance of the law is no excuse.” For police officers this is true also, but it is not for their own personal violation of the law but for the proper charges and documentation of criminal behavior that officers must study and keep on studying with updates and refreshers and what is called “in-service trainings” to try as they might to know the law of the land. When a crime occurs and officers make an arrest and place someone in custody, they must make decisions of what exact violation of the law the offender will be charged. This is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Things like

marital status, age, state of mind, and circumstances all go into the decisions an officer will make. Therefore they must know the law. While it is not an officer's greatest fear to make a mistake, but when it does happen it will cause great frustration, which will cause anger.

Ill will – Sometimes people use an expression, “He has gotten on his bad side,” meaning, of course, that no matter what a person does he cannot please the other individual. Most times this is because the other person is angry about something. Trying to resolve an anger issue with another person is not always easy and requires patience and humility. Many, if not most, people are not willing to invest in people that they have “rubbed the wrong way” and gotten on “their bad side.” So ill will is a cause of additional anger in many people.

This is an especially easy cause for police officers to fall prey to. They can run into issues with a supervisor, and no matter what they do, they seem to have done the wrong thing in the course of their work. The same thing for officers, if they seem to get upset with their supervisors no matter what decision the supervisor makes, they pick it apart and are not satisfied with their leadership. In addition to the ill will within the department there can be ill will with the public at times. Officers doing their job will make arrests as people violate the law. These people have brothers, cousins, moms, and dads that often feel the police were out of bounds to arrest their loved one. They talk, gesture, glare, and send a message to

officers that in our community they are not welcome. Ill will with the community is something that departments must work to guard against. Where it does creep in, police officers who have sworn to protect the public that is angry with them, then feel they have a very legitimate reason to be angry with the public.

What are the Frustrations of Police?

Frustration is a cause of anger because of the helpless feelings it brings to an individual. When there is nothing you can do in a situation that is emotional and moves you to action, and there is not a course of action to take, anger is often the result.

There are thousands of things that frustrate each of us daily. Cars that do not start, bills that are too high, buttons that pop off shirts, wrong numbers on the telephone, pets that potty in the wrong place, and we could go on and on. These are things that all people have in common, but there are some very specific to the job for police, and these add even more to lives that are stretched every day due to job conditions and environment. Thinking about police officer experiences, it becomes easy to see that the events of police work can add a great amount of frustration in their lives. This is especially true for the tragic things that they have very little opportunity to help or to change.

A murder suicide is an example of a situation where there is nothing an officer can do, as the offender is dead. But also there are innocent people dead.

Nothing the officer can do can bring anyone back to life. There is little to do except the paperwork and deal with the survivors. The frustration of such an event is tough on the emotions of officers, and they soon build up walls of callous emotions so that they do not feel the pain of the frustration. But an event like this will produce some anger. Anger that is building up and that needs to be reacted too. Anger which is like a charge on a battery building up polarity and will be ready to be discharged later.

It seems that there are a good many things that are somewhat unique to the police world. We will look at each of these individually and give reason why they tend to build up anger in law enforcement personnel. Once again we have listed six but there are very likely many more.

Escape of Violators – Every day that a police officer goes to work he has an objective. Putting people who violate the law in jail is the goal. Not getting himself or coworker hurt or killed in the process of work is the number one rule of how the job gets done. So as officers go out each day they seek to find a “perpetrator” or perp as they are called in police lingo. As they encounter perps it is inevitable that some escape. The officer knows they are guilty and they either elude the officer by running, just melting into the traffic or sometimes they have enough of an alibi on the spot that an officer knows the charges will not stick. Perhaps he did not

actually see the offense so there is the problem of giving a clear witness, but he or she knows without a doubt that the person is guilty. But if they get off the hook because of lack of evidence this is extremely frustrating. This kind of frustration can bring on the familiar emotion of anger.

Evidence procurement and preservation- The liability of a criminal situation in many ways shifts from the criminal to the law enforcement officer when the officer arrives on the scene. The crime scene is roped off when it is a major crime and evidence is always preserved. CSI and countless other TV shows highlight the need to preserve even the littlest of details such as hair, fibers, tracks, and anything else that is there. Officers have the responsibility to preserve and protect lives first. So evidence comes second to people, but knowing this the officer works in an around crime scenes with careful planning and skill that only comes from on the job training. Some evidence can only be used if a search warrant is in place. There must be probable cause for an officer to get the warrant. The warrant is not something the officer can do on his own, but must contact the court and wait on a judge to agree with him that a warrant is needed, and then issue the warrant to the officer before the evidence can be collected. This can be a frustrating process for officers. Personalities of people start to show and anger can flare when things do not happen fast enough or mistakes are made on paper work.

Evaluation of Situations and People- Law enforcement is directed at people, because people are the ones who violate laws. Officers are constantly evaluating the words and actions of people as they engage people who have an infraction of the law. Police officers have heard many excuses for speeding, running red lights, and many other violations. As they hear them they have to evaluate and decide is this person telling the truth? Who do I believe? What action should I now take to make a charge or not. Should I a make a charge, but let them off with a warning? This is a huge responsibility and one that no officer takes lightly, but it is an everyday, several times a day event. Taking a persons freedom by placing a person under arrest, taking a person's automobile by impound are all actions with repercussions if done in a flippant or arbitrary manner.

Recently my wife was summoned to serve on jury duty. As she was interviewed for a case she was ask "Do you believe that police officers are always right?" Well the obvious answer is no. Kathy being wise answered with a hypothetical "I suppose they could make a mistake." What was the attorney trying to do? Establish in her mind that the police officer was wrong in his action. Frustration can come as officers are again and again in case after case questioned about their decision-making ability and their evaluation skills. The obvious answer is that they can and sometimes do make an error. In the experience of the chaplain

author of this study after many hours of riding and observing officers as they do their duty that while they can make a mistake in matters of duty they make very, very, few. When they are not sure of a situation charges will not be filed and people will not be arrested.

Lack of time for family – While there will never be one single event that the officer can put his finger on there will be many times when he goes into the station with a real sense of I need to be at home for my family right now. Birthdays, family gatherings, sickness, holidays, and things that most people would take off time from work will find an officer in demand or worse summoned to court and there will be little way to get around being “at work.” This is very frustrating to officers. This is true especially after they build some seniority or attain rank and they still have to work on Christmas. It seems they are always on call, and in fact many special units are always on call. They will get some time off but many times it is not when they need or want it. If the kids are in school and the wife is working “What good is the day at home.” I have heard many officers say. Frustration in this area comes as the officer tries to be a part of his / her family, but is caught in the trap of shift work, and needs to be on the job for significant events as they unfold. The frustration in this area is subtle and builds. If an argument with spouse occurs over the time worked, and this becomes a sore spot, it can become a relief to go to

the job to get away from the pressure of time at home. Officers are hesitant to promise they will be at events because if an emergency occurs then they would have to break a promise. Better to not make the promise than break it. This being the case often when they could attend some family event they do not go after all they did not promise to come.

Lack of social network – The social network of the police officer often deteriorates in the first few years of his work. Added to the lack of time for family is lack to time for others. When they get off most people are headed to work or are already home for the evening and it is too late to go out to eat or for social events. Police buddies are all in the same boat so if they go out for a little recreation they will tend to stick together. The network then becomes only other police officers. There is a lot of good in “birds of a feather flocking together,” but there is also much danger. The lack of other friends feeds some of the negative attitudes that police may develop about the public, the department, and those who are not attached to law enforcement. Frustration comes then to officers who are somewhat trapped in this maze of wanting friends and wanting to spend time with people they know, trust and love, but struggling because people do not know how to be friends with a police officer. Kevin Gilmartin addresses this idea in this work on the emotions of police officers. Gilmartin writes.

“One of the most difficult aspects of being a law enforcement officer is the need to strike a balance between being highly effective law enforcement professional and at the same time an available friend, spouse or parent outside of the law enforcement role. This capacity to balance multiple significant emotional roles in one’s life is the central defining aspect of an emotional survivor versus an emotional victim.”¹⁶

Lack of trust for others – The Lack of Family time and lack of Social network combined with the reality of police work breeds a mistrust for the public because of the element of society the police are constantly deal with in their work. A very common feeling among many officers is that the police for several reasons cannot trust most of the public. The first reason is people on a very regular basis lie them. Some of these are “good people’ but people who do not want to admit they were speeding, or failed to yield, or were doing something they got caught in, and think that they can tell a different version of what really happened and get away with it. Police are trained in questioning people and often work through this in short order, and so the mistrust of others begins to build.

Not trusting then means an officer will become very detailed in the way they do business because they are often not trusting of business owners, contractors,

¹⁶ Gilmartin, *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*, 131.

agents, and anyone who would provide a service. They are not trusting of anyone who wants information from them. It can become difficult as they tend to try to protect children and spouse from would be predators because they have seen so many who have bad intents for people. It is very natural to not trust anyone when you have seen so many who cannot be trusted. Children and spouses may not understand their protection and become frustrated and then angry about the lack of trust. Anger breeds a reaction of anger as the officer sees the danger and the spouse does not.

What are the Failures of Police?

This section is difficult for any law enforcement officer to read. No one likes to admit failure. Yet in an imperfect world with imperfect people all people do fail at some things that they attempt. In the Tactical Bible Law Enforcement Chaplain Steve Lee writes,

Every Officer's prayer is, "Lord help me not to screw up." Perhaps a cop's biggest nightmare is making a serious mistake that leads to serious consequences. Unfortunately, officers (sometimes even good officers with the best of intentions) can get in over their heads. God's word gives comfort, forgiveness, and healing in those nightmare situations. Scripture gives infinitely better solutions than self-destructive behaviors such as crawling into a bottle or the wrong bed, or even worse, "eating your gun" – suicide.¹⁷

The typical law enforcement officer is a type "A" personality. Perfection is something strived for always. In his 1996 book, *Type A Behavior: Its Diagnosis and Treatment*, Milton Friedman suggests that Type A behavior is expressed in three major symptoms: free-floating hostility, which can be triggered by even minor incidents; time urgency and impatience, which causes irritation and exasperation; and a competitive drive, which causes stress and an achievement-

¹⁷ Lee, Steve. God's Word for Peace Officers. *The Tactical Bible*, Peace Officer Ministries, third edition, p 21.

driven mentality. The first of these symptoms is believed to be covert and therefore less observable, while the other two are more overt.^[18]

The term “free floating hostility” is a little ambiguous, but the world has sort of picked up and given a general meaning of anger without a cause. George Carlin a famous shock comedian recorded an album with more expletives than even the foulest mouth cop, with a feature cut entitled *Free Floating Hostility*. The point of the comedy was simply the fact that some people are just angry. Most of us know people who are just angry and there really does not seem to be a cause, but the reality is, there is a reason, even if unseen and unknown consciously to the angry individual. The culprit for many who are like this is unacknowledged failure.

Failure in the officer’s family – The family of any officer is most important to them. The divorce rate among police is very high. There are so many causes. Shift work, stress of the job, lack of trust, all of which have already been discussed will tax a marriage making the law enforcement officer something less than what the young bride or groom saw in the person they married. The marriage may be continuing as the couple lives together for the sake of children and connivance, but the goals and hopes of the life with the one they married are not real. To talk about marriage there will be a positive façade that is always put forward the “we are

¹⁸ ▲ Friedman, M. (1996). *Type A Behavior: Its Diagnosis and Treatment*. New York, Plenum Press (Kluwer Academic Press), pp. 31 ff.

happily married,” when in fact there is a growing sense of dissatisfaction with their partner.

Occasionally as the problems escalate the officer will entertain thoughts of divorce, but this really means admission of failure and so that idea is suppressed along with anger that wells up inside due to the frustration.

Obviously with the high divorce rate, many marriages do fail. For some type “A” officers the reality of the failure is so traumatic that failure has to have an excuse real or manufactured or the officer feels they will lose all credibility. The anger caused by this type of frustration.

A second major frustration in the life of the officer originating in the family is in being the parent they want to be. Again stress, hours of the job, and lack of trust can cause an officer who is a parent to be strict, untrusting of friends of the child or the friends parents. The officer parent will usually be very firm and controlling of children as the control of situations is what keeps them alive on the job. Children and spouses both may react badly to this by open rebellion, or by deceit. When children do these things again there is a reality of failure, but too often a frustration that will breed this idea of free floating hostility or anger that seems to have no cause.

Failure as Law Officer – Every cop wants to be the one to make the big arrest. So often this author has sat down in the squad car to hear the officer say something like this, “I hope we get a stolen car today.” Or “Lets go find some bad guys.” Inside of every officer is the desire to make the arrest of the really bad element of society. And sometimes they do, but it is not an everyday action with most police officers. The occasional big arrest serves to establish and give the officer the recognition needed, to be established as a good cop. It is sort of an odd thing that someone else has to break the law doing something very bad in order for an officer to do a good job. The truth is though there are no lack of those who do bad things. The work of the police officer is dependent on bad things happening and his success or active measure is tied to the crime rate. While a cop can say there is no crime in my beat to not have any crime means there is little to do, but ride around and look for trouble. Cops want to be in on the action and be proactive, but this can be dangerous if they get too aggressive.

Youth has ambition and idealism and with this seems to go hope and ambition for pushing forward in a difficult career. This may be especially true in young police officers who want to make an impact in the world. Being a police officer and ridding the world of crime may seem like a foolish dream but every police officer has a bit of this dream as a young and new officer. Dealing with the reality of police protocols and procedures soon makes a routine job of what was

once a grand vision. The routine job if not careful can become a rut of endless miles of driving and paperwork going to one routine call after another with a hope of excitement with each dispatch to the realization that it is just one more false alarm. Monotony sets in and a guard is let down. Danger is the first aspect of this scenario, but on top of this is also frustration with the job. Frustration about the chosen career and lack of motivation could soon lead to failure as an officer.

Failure as a man or a woman of God– The last area gets into the failure that is common to so many in all walks of life. As we live in a fallen world we try as we might not to do things we know are wrong, but bad habits seem to creep back in to our lives. Some of us eat too much, exercise too little, and we end up out of shape, short of wind and unsatisfied with who we are physically. Church is very difficult to connect with for an officer and his or her family for reasons already stated. Being a person of faith in the police world is not impossible but little in the arena of LEO's point them toward God.

The environment of the officer, on and off the job is not always ideal. Language, places that are visited and habits to unwind all can be a downward spiral. This spiral tends to take an officer away from the ideal of their faith and bring out a worldliness and manner of life that is on equal footing with where the officer spends much of his on the job activity. The fact is that bad language is one of the

things that officers struggle with a lot. Unlike many of the criminals that they lock up they realize that foul language cannot be and should not be used in certain settings. Yet, they are so used to hearing it and being around its use that they think nothing of using vulgar and foul language commonly. That is they use it if they feel they can do so without repercussion.” The use seems to make a point or add emphasis or at least be funny. This is true for all ranks and even among leadership in the government at times. The use of vulgar and foul language has permeated our society. The use of profanity is an odd trait of human. All people know that using profanity is outside of the area of compliance with their faith, if they have a faith. And even for those who do not hesitate at the use of profanity is not considered as adding any degree of intellectual benefit to a conversation, but quite the opposite. Most times profanity is apologized for and seems to admit a certain amount of lack of control over a person’s vocabulary. This author has never met anyone who really took pride in the ability to cuss. Oh, jokes are made and some people will cuss to make their language seem more intense, but the use of profanity is demeaning to anyone who uses it as a regular part of their vocabulary. This is a failure of the person as a man or woman of God, and when considered carefully does bring a certain amount of realization of failure into the officers life. Excuses like “it just slipped out” or “I could not help it” do admit failure in a basic area of what a police officer is trained to do.

In the area of an officer's faith there can be multiple areas of complications to having a healthy dynamic relationship with God. Every person experiences some failure in lives, and these bring about a certain amount of anger in their own mind about their own abilities and competence. But in the extreme situations of the world of law enforcement, which deals in matters of life and death, and has stress filled moments constantly, and considering the general lifestyle and work environment of a police officer, there seems to be magnification of any and all failures. The performance of the duty of a police officer calls for a high standard. The letting down of that standard could result in mistakes or violations of procedures could result in serious property loss, injury or death. Cavalier attitudes among police are well known especially among young upcoming officers who get some successes in their work. Statistics show that the most vulnerable time for an officer is when he has been on the job for four or five years and has developed a confidence in himself and his coworkers. Assumptions are made and some assumptions in law enforcement can cost someone their life. The work of law enforcement is not a perfect world yet perfection is so often sought by officers to drive them to perform.

Realizations about Anger

People learn from each other. As infants we begin to learn how to make sounds with which to communicate basic needs. We learn how to express ourselves with

thoughts and gestures by watching others. So a natural question that can be asked as anger management is considered is: Who taught you how to be angry? The emotional reaction of being harmed or wronged to cause fear, frustration, or failure to be realized is a result of two things, expectations and reality.

First lets examine expectations. A police officer was relaying to me recently about his childhood and who his father was in his life. Or better said, not in his life. His father was a workaholic who never came home until late at night so he saw him very little. The officer told me how he never made it to ball games and other important events in life. The remarkable thing about this was he thought that was the way it was supposed to be. He did not know any different. He realizes now that as a child he did not know any better than this and he had grown up thinking this is what all men did. He thought that all fathers were too busy to go to children's ball games even though he desperately wanted his dad to see him on first base. The truth is that now he realizes this and as this reality conflicted with his expectations something had to change. At some point anger came as a result of the clash of expectation (no expectations of his dad coming) to realization, that his dad should have made an effort to come see his son. The officer had to deal with anger over what should have been, as opposed to what reality was.

In life all people are constantly dealing with these two concepts. Expectations, which are real in, all people's mind about themselves and the world around them,

and the real world that they are forced to live in every day. There are also expectations of nature and inanimate objects and expectations of things to continue day to day according to the natural processes in the world. For example people expect the weather to vary and change from hot to cold as the seasons change. There is a certain expectation of rain to replenish the earth. If there is a drought or an extended period of hot or cold reasonable people know that this is abnormal weather. They learn this by both experience, and from others. So as people we have come to know and understand about weather by our past experiences and the teaching of others. As we have repeated experiences like weather or interpersonal relationships we develop expectations about what to expect and we become accustomed to the pattern. It is when the pattern is broken that there is a decision made, is this beneficial or good for me? Or is this bad for me? The negative answer can result in disappointment or anger.

The clash between what we think should be, and what is, is constant in all aspects of life. When the difference between the two is realized the result can often be anger. When anger happens in a person there will be a response to the anger. So it is obvious that just like a person learns to be angry, we have watched others to learn what to do when we become angry.

So as we begin to turn to the formation of a BAMS people have to realize this fact and ask themselves a question. What did others teach you to do when they became

angry? What kind of example did they set in their actions, speech and mannerisms? Was it acceptable socially or did others have a very negative reaction to the anger? All of this will help determine how others will react when they face similar anger situations. In the process if it is learned that negative reactions will occur if anger is voiced, then suppression of anger is also learned by the need to continue in peaceful relationship.

Patterns of response to anger are therefore learned and practiced by people. Some people or groups of people will tolerate more display of anger than others. For example a football coach, or a drill sergeant is much more tolerated when they get angry than say a pastor of a local church. Why is this acceptable for one to swear and scream and violate your personal space and not the other. Or is it acceptable for neither to do it, but we only tolerate it more from a certain role model? The toleration is in fact due to the learned aspect of what we expect from individuals. This is especially true sometimes in the family. How many times have you heard something like this said by a person. "Mom used to make us mind, but I was deathly afraid of my father." What we did not want to happen was mom saying the dreaded words "Just wait until your dad gets home and I tell him what you did." Was this because there was a different standard for Moms and Dads on what they could do to administer punishment? Or was it a difference in what Mom and Dad had learned and taught the child in response to anger issues.

For law enforcement the response to anger is critical. Officers know from past experiences with anger what has worked and what has not worked well. They have a lot of things that can make them angry, but must respond to most the anger with passive response. They must remain cool and under control even in the face of explosive anger within their mind and heart.

Development of a Biblical Anger Management System

The development of any type of system is a process and anger management truly is something that requires a processing of thoughts, values, and ideas to reach conclusions. Making decisions about what is acceptable and more important biblical should then become the practice of an individual and ultimately a way of life to control anger, bitterness and many problematic tendencies that people are prone to have in life. In order to develop such a system we must set out a couple of very important prerequisites for a BAMS to actually be functional in a persons life.

The first prerequisite is in order to utilize a BAMS a person must believe the Bible. The person must have knowledge of what is contained in the Bible and believe in the authority and truth of the Scripture. This study is not the place to dwell further on issues like inerrancy, infallibility or to try to discuss items like translations, hermeneutics, or canonization. There are many good studies available on line or in Christian bookstores. The approach of this study will take is to say that if a person has a faith in God, and that they have acquired that faith from the

Scripture of the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible, then it is complimentary to their belief system to develop a way of both living and dealing with anger issues from the same authority in which they have developed a belief in God. It matters not how they came to the belief. If they have directly studied the Scripture to arrive at that belief, or if they have arrived at their point of faith through the teaching of pastors, Sunday School teachers, friends or parents. The more important fact is that a belief in God through the teaching of Scripture is in place in the person's life. Then it does really matter if they are seeking to gain knowledge of the Scriptures daily. They must be pursuing knowledge and applying the things they have learned through the power and work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

The development of this system will be based on the use of the Scriptures to give background, philosophy and structure to our developing BAMS. Then implementation of a BAMS comes by living for God daily and obedience to the life and work of the Spirit of God in a person's life.

The Anger of God

The concept of anger management from a biblical perspective starts at what can be a very difficult concept to attempt to reconcile in a person's mind. There are many references in Scripture to the "anger of God." We must examine some of the

biblical material and develop a framework about God's anger and it will lead to a sense of understanding about what anger is justified and what is not.

The Bible says plainly that God is angry or will become angry in many places.¹⁹ But we must note that God is shown to be angry only when He has a just reason. When the Bible records that God is angry it is because of something man is doing. We see that God always deals with the anger in a very timely manner. God other attributes do not suffer or diminish in any way when He is angry. He still loves us and He is still merciful even though He takes stern measures with His people. The Book of Deuteronomy is a record of God's dealing with his people and often speaks of God's anger but continually points out the deliverance of God's people even though the Israelites could never seem to keep their focus on serving the Lord. Moses speaks to the people to remind them, *"Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness ; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD."*²⁰

The ultimate thoughts that so many bring to mind when they think about the anger of God is the vivid imagery of the Revelation of John found at the end of the New Testament. While there are vivid images of the anger of God in this book it

¹⁹ Genesis 22:15, Exodus 4:14, 22:24, Numbers, 11:33, 25:4, 32:10-15, Deuteronomy 13:17 Isaiah 5:25

²⁰ Deuteronomy 9:7,

was never intended to teach people about the anger of God. But this book was written to give Christians who were under persecution hope. John Phillips a leading theologian says this about the Revelation,

The book of Revelation was probably written during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian, about A.D. 95. The emperor had demanded that public worship be rendered to himself; he was to be worshiped as lord and god. Christians refused to obey, and the second great wave of persecution against the church was launched. The Christians were subjected to public ridicule, economic boycott, imprisonment, exile and death. The book of Revelation was God's answer to that reign of terror. Christians could see, in a dimension never before revealed, that God was still on the throne.²¹

The Revelation of John is therefore a book of hope and a source of inspiration not a blow by blow account of how God will get even with sinners or those who reject Him. The reality is that this book of Revelation that many would use to describe the anger of God would in many ways be better suited to be equated with the justice of God. The vivid descriptions bowls of wrath being poured out while apocalyptic in their nature are in fact only the process by which God overcome and eliminates all of the evil and sources for evil in the world.

A world ruined by man and a world ruled by Satan has been described. Now the time has come for the world to be rescued by God. Down into the arena of human affairs He comes, shortening the days and making a swift, sudden end of

²¹ John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, First Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune New Jersey 1991, pg 11.

the Beast and his hideous strength. The vials, shallow bowls used in the temple worship, are filled now with wrath and are swiftly outpoured.²²

The fact that God ultimately deal with evil should be a source of hope, inspiration and joy to every believer. Once again it is important to remind the reader that this study is based on the Bible and that the teaching of the scripture is what we will us to framework the system of anger management. Millard J. Erickson whose systematic theology is very well developed in his great volume entitled *Christian Theology*, makes a statement that helps to give structure to BAMS, “Although God is not the enemy of sinners nor does he hate them, it is also quite clear that God is angered by sin.²³ Going even further Erickson points out how God has shown us in his plan of salvation for all people that we are to love those who are at enmity with us.²⁴ It is not that God considers us his enemy but we have chosen to make God our enemy.²⁵

People should realize how patient God is with all people²⁶ and how much he is willing to do for every person to enjoy and be in a relationship with the Creator.²⁷ The anger of God is something that will be kindled by rejection of God

²² *ibid.* pg 189.

²³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Baker House, Grand Rapids, 1985, pg 604.

²⁴ Romans 5:8

²⁵ Colossians 1:21

²⁶ 2 Peter 3:9

²⁷ John 3:16

himself.²⁸ The truth of knowing God and having a faith in Him takes brings a peace and a joy in the life of a believer such that there is an understanding of the perfect love of God which delivers us from any fear of the anger of God.²⁹

Our frame work must begin with an understanding that God will ultimately deal with evil and that the person of faith has been justified by that faith in God and therefore the anger of God as his elimination of sin and evil will come one day is not to be feared but welcomed with open arms.

Men In the Bible Who Were Angry

The Bible is full of stories about men and their interaction with God and each other. As we read and study these stories we can gain great insight into times when people got angry and how they dealt with anger. We see some that were wise and some that were not so wise.

Cain - Can offered a sacrifice to God but it did not please the Lord.³⁰ Why? Because his heart was not right. He brought a sacrifice from the “fruit of the ground.” It should have been the first fruits.³¹ We can attempt do the right things but we are miserable within ourselves because of an attitude or lack of faith to

²⁸ Luke 12:10

²⁹ 1 John 4:18

³⁰ Genesis 4:5

³¹ Exodus 22:9

believe God, and when the natural consequences come because of our attitude or lack of belief we become frustrated and ultimately angry.

Here in is a second part of our frame work to build the BAMS. Disregarding what God has said, or direct disobedience to God will result in missing of the blessing of God. Cain certainly experienced this and so did his brother because of the disobedience of Cain. This should not be confusing but simple. If you believe God obey Him. Serve Him. And Love Him. If you choose not to do so expect that there will be trouble.

Saul -Saul had it made. He was the absolute ruler of Israel. He had no one trying to take his position and yet he was jealous and feared David. His fear is unfounded of this younger man who was friends with his son. The fear of David who had proved himself as a devoted servant to the king drove him to attempt to take the life of his own son.³² Fear is a cause of anger that will quickly cause people to react in ways that are out of character and irrational.

Naaman - Here is a story that most law enforcement officers can identify with clearly. Naaman was a captain. He had rank and the prestige and power that goes

³² Samuel 20:30-33

with it. He was a man however with a problem as he contracted leprosy. Lepers were people who were ostracized, and abandoned to fend for themselves in the wilderness away from society. No doubt his rank and influence had kept him in the mainstream far longer than the average person, but he was desperate because as the disease progressed he knew he would lose everything he had in life including his life. He was a good man. So much so that a little girl was prayerful for him and recommended that he go to to see the prophet in Israel where there would be healing. So after some official letter writing from one king to another and a big show of a caravan of horses and people the Captain came to stand before the humble prophet's home. But instead of the prophet coming out with a big show and hand waving service the prophet sent a messenger to Naaman to tell him to go wash in the Jordan River. Look at Naaman's response,

But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.³³

Words like furious and rage are very strong and when you couple with a man who has power and authority this could become dangerous to the prophet or anyone else

³³ 2 Kings 5:11-12

who makes the big guy angry. But again we see Naaman has some good qualities as his servants have obvious respect, but enough freedom to challenge their leader and persuade him to reconsider and do what the prophet suggested. And in some ways even more remarkable was the response that Naaman did what they ask and gave in to the prophets command to go was in the Jordan. The happy result was healing, but before the healing, and before he got wet, even before he headed to the river was the control of anger.

Jonah - The prophet Jonah is well known for running from God and his ride inside the belly of the fish, but in the long run he was a very effective preacher. The city on Nineveh repented and turned to God and they were spared destruction. But it should be noted these are Jonah's enemies and to see them be spared was not exactly what Jonah had in mind. As a matter of fact the prophet was so angry and bitter about it he prayed to die. The prophet Jonah experienced first hand the first point of the framework we are setting up for BAMS. God's anger is reserved for those who reject Him completely. Jonah knew this as he said,

“He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to

Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.³⁴

So Jonah knew God has compassion yet because they are his enemies he wanted them dead. Even wishing for death himself because they were spared. But in the next few verses God demonstrates to Jonah his own selfishness. A little plant grows up to shade Jonah from the sun, which makes him very happy. But then the Lord sends a worm to bring destruction to the plant and Jonah is again depressed to the point of death. The Lord points out the selfishness of the prophet who wants only his comfort with no compassion on others, but only thinks of himself. God teaches Jonah that life is God's to give and his to take away for all things. Service and honor to God is what life is about. Jonah was angry and bitter. He had no control over his anger even though he saw the hand of God working after he preached the message of God. Even when we are in a relationship with God anger can still plague the person who has accomplished much for the Kingdom of God.

Unbiblical Response To Anger

Explode with anger and rage and vent your anger –

This is an unhealthy response to anger for several reasons. First it makes irrational decisions to explode without knowing all the details. Explosions of anger are

³⁴ Jonah 4:2

spontaneous and not thought out about the consequences of the actions we take or the words that we might use. Second judgment is made on others actions usually in a explosion of anger and venting or raging is usually directed at others and this is unbiblical and often unfounded. Proverbs 16:32 says: “ [32](#)*Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.*”

An explosion of anger would certainly violate the Golden Rule and is therefore not an appropriate response to anger.

[12](#)*“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:12*

Ventilate Anger with pillow or other object. – Sometimes people want to just punch something or squeeze something to express anger. While this may make a person think they feel better the reality is that there is poison in the heart that feels the anger and an attitude of violence is what is being expressed through the action.

[14](#) *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19:14*

The Lord is never impressed by our punching a pillow, or going outside and screaming, or by vulgar or coarse language.

Seethe on the inside and take out frustrations on others- This is a very difficult and sometimes deceiving action. The frustrations that make you angry can build up in your heart and cause you to be grumpy, hostile, or even violent toward

others who have nothing to do with your cause of anger. Some may not even be aware of how anger is causing their outlook on everything else in their life to become troublesome and a burden such that their attitude on most everything becomes negative. They could be considered out of control. The bible says in Proverbs 25:28: [28](#) *A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.* Obviously taking your anger out on innocent people is very wrong.

What to do about Justified anger.

In the life and work of every person there are times when you will become angry. No doubt sometimes the anger is justified and of course it is very real and causes us to be moved to action. What will a Biblical Anger Management System do for us when we are angry.

Biblical Response To Anger

It is permissible to be angry, and to do so without sin will be a goal of our BAMS. The real key is that anger must be controlled, and to do it you will need all of the realities of living out your life as a person of faith. Anger is a response to some situation or some person and while anger may be kindled in the heart the response is a direct result of the heart and the mind. It is a choice how you respond. You

will make that choice by what you have learned in the past. If your most immediate past has the work of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ as your goal, then the circumstance that has produced anger should be handled according to the precepts of the Word of God. Sounds simple to write or read, but so much more difficult when anger comes your way. Anger is somewhat of a reaction just like fear, or being startled. The guideline given by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians is really important to take note of: *Be angry and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, Ephesians 4:26*

A second response to anger is to speak the truth in love. This truth is found also in Ephesians in verse 25:

*Therefore laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*³⁵ *Ephesians 4:25*

If and when you are dealing with someone who seems to be abusive and taxing on your welfare, anger is not what Jesus tells us to do.

44But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. Matthew 5:44-45

Jesus had occasion to be be angry. He was angry with the hardened hearts of the Pharisees in Mark chapter 3. His response was to demonstrate the love of God by

³⁵ Eph 4:25

healing a man with a withered hand. He displayed compassion and love even in the face of animosity.

Jesus clearing the temple is an event in Scripture that people often refer to as a time that Jesus was angry. However upon close reading of the two time Jesus did clear the temple the Scripture does not say Jesus was angry. In both John Chapter 2 and Matthew Chapter 21 Jesus clears the temple of the money changers. This is of particular importance to the law enforcement world. As stated many think Jesus was angry at this moment. I think he was operating both times more like a peace officer and was doing the job of a cop to clear out the people. And In Matthew He states the reason. Jesus was taking action because a law had been broken.

¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” Matthew 21:13

Anger does not ever need to be connected to the work of a law enforcement officer. Anger can lead to irrationality and quickly becomes a safety factor for police who become frustrated and angry.

Controlled response in the right frame of mind should always control officer's actions. This means on the job, and at home, at church, on the job or whenever and wherever you may find yourself. Response to the emotion of anger is not to be taken lightly. Never should there be an irresponsible or angry response to any situation that an officer must step into taking actions that deal with a broken law or a circumstance that requires action in the line of duty.

Summary

We have examined several aspects of anger and how people respond. Our Ancient Philosopher Seneca suggests, in order to avoid becoming angry in the first place, that the many faults of anger should be repeatedly remembered. To cease being angry, Seneca suggests "one to check speech and impulses and be aware of particular sources of personal irritation. In dealing with other people, one should not be too inquisitive: It is not always soothing to hear and see everything.

This author believes anger response is a very controllable behavior. However anger is also a very powerful emotion and not one to be taken lightly. So here in summary are a few things to keep in mind.

When someone appears to slight you, you should be at first reluctant to believe this, and should always wait to hear the full story. You should also put yourself in the place of the other person, trying to understand his or her motives and any extenuating factors, such as age or illness. But most importantly is to live always keeping in mind the value system that comes from your faith in Christ. Biblical principle should be first in a Christian man or woman's life. The principles of a good BAMS will be simple to live the thought "What would Jesus do?"

Development of a BAMS comes by obedience to God in all aspects of life. It means self-sacrifice and connection to the Body of Christ through a local church. It means a life of seeking to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. All of this is far beyond the

scope of this writing but germane to the reality that a true disciple of Christ will discover they have anger under control.

"[9] Seneca further advises daily self-inquisition about one's bad habit.[9] To deal with anger in others, Seneca suggests that the best reaction is to simply keep calm. A certain kind of deception, Seneca says, is necessary in dealing with angry people.[9]