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1. What is your experience of anger?
2. Are there situations or issues in your life that tap into your anger more than others? If so, what are they? What steps might you take to understand why these things tend to push your buttons more readily than others?
3. How successful are you at naming – and managing – your anger?
4. What strategies might you employ for getting a better handle on your anger?
5. Are there any relationships in your life that have been damaged by anger? Are there any steps you can take to repair the damage?



De Sales, Francis: Introduction to the Devout Life. Various Editions and Publishers. Part 3: Chapters 8 and 9.

De Sales, Francis: Treatise on the Love of God. Various Editions and Publishers. Book 10: Chapters 15 and 16.



De Sales

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Anger

**SALESIAN
PERSPECTIVES**



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...A Volatile Subject

Ever been angry? Of course you have! Anger is a fact of life.

A sometimes volatile fact of life.

Like any emotion, it cannot be denied or suppressed. Nor should it be recklessly unbridled. It needs to be understood...and owned.

Anger is not sinful. However, how we deal with it – or fail to deal with it – can have sinful results.

“It is better to attempt to find a way to live without anger, rather than pretend to make a moderate or discreet use of it.”

We seldom plan to grow angry. Anger is an intense response or reaction to an injury or injustice, either actual or perceived. As such, it often catches us off guard.

Herein lies the difficulty. Precisely because of its spontaneity and intensity, anger can quickly get the upper hand...and get out of hand. Anger is, as it were, an uninvited guest that can quickly become the master of the house. “Once admitted it is with difficulty driven out again. It enters as a little twig, and in less than no time it grows big and becomes a beam.”

Francis de Sales counsels us: “It is better to attempt to find a way to live without anger, rather than pretend to make a moderate or discreet use of it. As

long as reason rules and peaceably exercises chastisements or corrections, people can approve and receive them. However, when accompanied by anger or rage, this same reason is feared rather than loved.”

“When it comes to anger, don’t try to fight fire with fire.”

Jane de Chantal suggests: “Try to calm your passions and live according to sound reason and the holy will of God.”

It is better to let anger cool before making a decision or taking some action.

Unbridled anger can be very destructive. Sometimes, however, the ways in which we react to being angry are worse than the anger itself. “Many are greatly to blame who, on being overcome by anger, are angry for being angry. In so doing, they keep their hearts drenched and steeped in anger.” Francis de Sales continues: “It frequently happens that, by endeavoring with violence to restrain our anger, we stir up more trouble in our heart, and being thus agitated, the heart is no longer master of itself.”

When it comes to anger, don’t fight fire with fire.

Still, we all fail in this regard. Despite our best efforts, we make decisions, take actions, and speak words

in anger, hurting others – and ourselves – in the process.

What can we do to repair the damage? “As soon as you perceive yourself guilty of an act of wrath, repair it immediately by an act of kindness toward the person with whom you were angry. As they say, wounds are most easily cured when they are still fresh.”

Repeatedly indulging in anger can lead to tragic results. When we brood over injuries, when we revisit old hurts, when we hold onto resentment, anger ceases to be simply an emotion: it becomes a way of life.

“Avoid acting in anger. Avoid speaking in anger. Above all, avoid wallowing in anger.”

Heed these words from the Book of Sirach: “Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. Should a person nourish anger against others and expect healing from the Lord? As a stone falls back upon the one who throws it up, so a blow struck in anger injures more than one. Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then, when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.” (Sir 27: 25; 28: 2-3)

Avoid acting in anger. Avoid speaking in anger. Above all, avoid wallowing in anger.

Anger is an emotion: not a way of life.