

Angry? Don't Ask "What?" But "Why?"

By Doug Fields - Thriving Marriages Blog - March 25, 2022

***In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. –
Psalm 4:4***

Recently, a friend admitted that his anger is impacting his marriage. He was searching for a Band-Aid idea that would slow him down and help with his anger (*kind of like the good old "count to 10" technique*).

My friend is not alone. From time to time, we all get angry. Some of us are good at hiding expressions of anger. Others aren't. There are no easy answers to being angry, but there's an easy question to ask:

The default question most ask is, "*What?*" What triggered my anger? But that's not the best question. It's too general! And not helpful.

What triggered my anger? Music, a dirty room, traffic, rudeness, not flushing the toilet, etc. Who cares? Instead of "*What?*" **ask "Why?"**

The why question forces you to peel back a layer from the surface and look inside your heart. Instead of asking what triggered my anger, ask, why did that make me angry?

When you ask what, you'll continue to blame the triggers and that won't help you stop the pain. When you ask why, chances are you'll discover one of two primary emotions hiding beneath the surface: you might imagine these two emotions hiding in the corner of your soul...one in the fetal position and one in the attack position.

All curled up in the fetal position will be **fear**. Every time I try to learn from my anger, I meet fear. I encounter fearful Doug. Fearful Doug expresses his anger because he was afraid, he wouldn't be a good dad or husband, afraid of failure or rejection, afraid that he can't control others to comply, and so on.

The second emotion is **hurt**. Hurt hides right next to fear, but like a wounded animal, hurt is very dangerous because all it knows how to do is attack others. If I hurt you with my anger, I don't have to focus on the hurt I feel or reopen the wounds I've never dealt with.

If we don't learn why we're angry, it keeps coming back out, over and over. Perhaps this is why in today's Scripture, we're told to "*search our hearts.*"

If you want to slay the dragon of anger, search your heart. Ask the right question. Learn from your emotions. Change your behavior. Improve your relationships. Easy? No. Doable? Yes.

GOING DEEPER:

1. When you experience anger, do you ask "Why?" or "What?"
2. When angry, how can you benefit from asking "What?" not "Why?"

FURTHER READING: Ephesians 4:31; James 1:20