

Are You Irritable?

What does the Bible have to say about being irritable?
First, let's look at some synonyms:

annoyed
antagonistic
anxious
apprehensive
bad-tempered
cantankerous
churlish
complaining
contentious
contrary
crabby
cranky
critical
cross
discontent
disgruntled
dissatisfied
easily offended
exasperated
faultfinding
fretful
grouchy
hard to please
hateful
impatient
indignant
moody
murmuring
nit-picking
ornery
oversensitive
petty
persnickety
perturbed
picky
quarrelsome
sensitive
snappy
surly

touchy
troubled
unsociable
upset
uptight
whining
worried

And here are some antonyms:

agreeable
amiable
calm
cheerful
compliant
considerate
content
cordial
courteous
easy-going
easy to get along with
forbearing
good-natured
gracious
gratified
happy
joyful
kind
mild
nice
patient
peace-loving
pleasant
pleased
reasonable
relaxed
satisfied
sociable
sweet
tolerant
uncomplaining
uncritical
undemanding
willing

Looking at these two lists makes me think a couple of things. One, I *excuse* a lot of bad attitude in myself by claiming it's part of my *highly sensitive personality type* and that my irritability is a *symptom* of my depression and anxiety.

Another thing I notice is that the second list is full of qualities we attribute to Jesus. And don't you and I, as Christians, know we need to acquire these qualities? Contentment...peacefulness...cheerfulness...to make the best of a bad situation...to look for the good in others...to tolerate and forbear the mistakes of others... Aren't these things we "preach" all the time?

It reminds me of something my high school social studies teacher said. We were all giving ideas of qualities we wanted in a spouse and I said "open-minded." He answered, just joking, I'm sure, "Yeah, you want them to be open-minded so you don't have to be." But that idea could apply to many of these positive adjectives. I want my spouse and the people around me to be agreeable, etc., but am I willing to lead the way, and put up with qualities on the first list when they show up in others and seek to only show those in the second list in my own life?

The story of the Israelite people leaving Egypt, found in the book of Numbers, is a good place to learn about God's response to our irritable behavior.

For instance, Numbers 21:4-7 in the Message paraphrase says "The people became irritable and cross as they traveled. They spoke out against God and Moses: 'Why did you drag us out of Egypt to die in this godforsaken country? No decent food; no water—we can't stomach this stuff any longer.' So GOD sent poisonous snakes among the people; they bit them and many in Israel died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke out against GOD and you. Pray to GOD; ask him to take these snakes from us." (Note: the people realized their attitude was sinful.)

Genuine Christian love stands in stark contrast to

irritable behavior, as we see in the following verses.
Prov. 10:12 (HCSB) "Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers all offenses."

Prov. 17:9 (NASV) "He who conceals a transgression seeks love...."

Prov. 21:9 (Amp.) "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop... than in a house shared with a nagging, quarrelsome, and faultfinding woman."

Prov. 21:19 (Darby) "It is better to dwell in a desert land than with a contentious and irritable woman."

1 Cor. 13:5 in the Common English Bible says that Love "... isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints..."

1 Cor. 13:4-5 (NLT) says "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged."

In the ESV, the above says "Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful..."

Phil. 4:8-9 (Amp.) "...whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]. Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of peace (of untroubled, undisturbed well-being) will be with you."

Titus 1:7 in the CEB, speaking of leaders, says "...overseers should be without fault as God's managers: they shouldn't be stubborn, irritable,

addicted to alcohol, a bully, or greedy."

James 3:17-18 (the Message) "Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor."

1 Pet. 4:8 (Amp.) "Above all things have intense and unflinching love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others]."

And maybe we're irritable because we are trying so hard to do things right, like Martha....

Luke 10:38-42 (KJV) "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

To sum it all up, irritability is a symptom, but it's also a sin. If you are irritable, you can improve your outlook. Take control of your negative thoughts and replace them with thoughts of love and consideration for others. Fill your mind with the Word of God day by day, and He will help you overcome a bad attitude.

Rom. 12:21 (KJV) "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Are You Feeling

Irritable?

*A few thoughts
from the Bible*

by Sister B.W.