

## UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE OF ANGER

**Ephesians 4:26–27 (NKJV) 26** “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **27** nor give place to the devil.

Anger is big issue!

In a recent NBC survey revealed that more than half of all Americans are more angry now than they were a year ago. Some call this the new *American Rage*.

What does the Bible have to say about this?

**Proverbs 29:11 (NKJV) 11** A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back.

**Ecclesiastes 7:9 (NKJV) 9** Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

**Proverbs 22:24 (NIV) 24** Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered,

**Psalms 37:8 (NIV) 8** Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.

**Proverbs 29:22 (NKJV) 22** An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.

*“Anger is an emotion characterized by antagonism toward someone or something you feel has deliberately done you wrong. Anger can be a good thing. It can give you a way to express negative feelings, for example, or motivate you to find solutions to problems. But excessive anger can cause problems. Increased blood pressure and other physical changes associated with anger make it difficult to think straight and harm your physical and mental health.”*

–The Encyclopedia of Psychology & APA

## **I. ANGER CAN BE A DESTRUCTIVE EMOTION!**

- a. It destroys health. It is like acid that eats away at the container.  
Anger is very hard on the body. It raises your cholesterol levels, setting you up for heart disease or a heart attack. It truly rots your bones.

**Proverbs 14:30 (NIV) 30** A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

- b. It destroys community. When we get angry, we throw words around like weapons. These thoughtless words destroy relationships and sometimes do irreparable harm.

**Proverbs 15:18 (NIV) 18** A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

- c. It destroys wisdom. You lose the ability to make wise choices. When you get angry it distorts your view of things, yourself, others, and even God.

**Proverbs 14:29 (NIV) 29** Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

- d. Anger can become an addictive life-style:

**Proverbs 19:19 (NIV) 19** A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again.

**Proverbs 19:19 (The Message) 19** Let angry people endure the backlash of their own anger; if you try to make it better, you'll only make it worse.

You cannot save someone from the consequences of their own anger. The deeper they get into it, the more adept they are at finding reasons to be angry.

## II. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF ANGER:

**Ephesians 4:26–27 (NKJV) 26** “Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **27** nor give place to the devil.

Anger is not a sin in and of itself. “Be angry, and do not sin”

But, anger can lead to sin, because it gives place to the devil.

### 1. Unrighteous anger:

Unrighteous anger is either being angry about the wrong thing or being angry about the right thing the wrong way.

#### a. Cain was angry about the wrong thing:

**Genesis 4:4–7 (NKJV) 4** Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, **5** but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. **6** So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”

We need to examine why we are angry. Before God ever asked Cain “Where is your brother?” he first asked him; “why are you angry?”

Thousands of years later, God asked Jonah the same question. **Jonah 4:3–11 (NKJV) 3** Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” **4** Then the Lord said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” **5** So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. **6** And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. **7** But as

morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. **8** And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." **9** Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" **10** But the Lord said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. **11** And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?"

b. Moses was angry about the right thing, the wrong way:

The Children of Israel were complaining yet again about the difficulty of the journey and wishing they had died in Egypt. Moses was angry at their continual unbelief. Yet, he acted on his anger in a way that displeased God and God disciplined Him for it.

**Numbers 20:10–11 (NKJV) 10** And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" **11** Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

[See also Psalm 106:32]

Moses had been angry at other times, but his anger had never driven him to disobey God:

**Exodus 32:19 (NKJV) 19** So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

- Over Israel's idolatry at the foot of Mt. Sinai – Exodus 32:19
- Over Israel's complaining about manna – Numbers 11:10
- Over the rebellion of Korah – Numbers 16:15
- Over the sin with the Midianites – Numbers 31:14

2. Righteous anger:

Righteous anger is being angry about the right thing, the right way.

Righteous anger can be constructive.

*“If I wish to compose or write or pray or preach well, I must be angry, Then, all the blood in my veins is stirred, and my understanding is sharpened.” – Martin Luther King Jr.*

### **III. ANGER CAN BE A GOOD AND GODLY EMOTION:**

The ideal in the Bible is not NO ANGER or EXPLODING ANGER.

The ideal in the Bible is to be SLOW TO ANGER.

**James 1:19–20 (NIV) 19** My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, **20** because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

We must make sure that we are angry about the right thing the right way. There is a time to be angry, but we must be careful about when and how.

*“He that is angry without cause sins. But he who is not angry when there is cause also sins.” – John Chrysostom*

Anger is an emotion often exhibited by God. The Bible says again and again that God is “slow to anger” (Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8; Nahum 1:3).

To never get angry would be a sign of indifference. God is not indifferent and we were never called to be indifferent. We are called to love and love is always engaged and passionate. Therefore, when the things we love are threatened or violated we should get angry.

### **IV. HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS DEAL WITH THEIR OWN ANGER:**

a. Admit your anger. Own it. “Be angry...”

Two carnal approaches to dealing with anger: Venting and Stuffing

In individualistic culture that stresses getting your rights, we are told to express our

anger and to find constructive ways of venting.

In morally traditional cultures, we are often told to deny our feelings and suppress our anger.

We are not to deny our anger. We do not deny our humanity. Anger is human emotion. It is part of being human in a Fallen World.

*“The easiest thing you’ll do all day is get ticked off at something. Anger is the lazy person’s emotion. It’s quick, it’s binary, it’s delicious. And more and more, we’re gorging on it.” – Jeffery Kluger, Time Magazine 2016*

To admit your anger is an act of vulnerability. People sometimes come to you with criticism, but they say “I’m not angry, I just want you to know...”

b. Analyze your anger.

What we say to ourselves feeds our anger. Self-talk has the power to enflame anger:

**Proverbs 20:22 (NIV) 22** Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!” Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you.

**Proverbs 24:29 (NIV) 29** Do not say, “I’ll do to them as they have done to me; I’ll pay them back for what they did.”

Instead of rehearsing and rehashing the provocation, ask yourself some questions:

i. “Why am I angry?” Anger is a secondary emotion. Nobody is just angry. People are angry because...

These feelings are flowing from something else going on in my heart. What is really causing this? Is my level of anger proportionate to the offense? What is the goal of my anger?

When is anger inappropriate: [MY NOTES]

- In its cause. If God’s love is an abstraction to us and we are seeking significance and fulfillment in other people and other things, we will stay angry. If we are looking for our meaning and security in people’s approval, a good reputation, or some kind of status, then when anything gets between you and that thing you have

to have, you get angry.

- In its proportion. We get angry disproportionately, because our love is disproportionate.
- In its goal. Angry should not cause us to seek other's destruction, but rather a correction of the issue. It is never a surgical strike, but a slash and burn of words and attack.

ii. "What am I defending?" Anger is a defensive emotion!

Anger is energy aroused in defense of something good and released against something evil.

c. Share our anger with God:

Pressure builds when we have more coming into us than we have going out.

**1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) 7** casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

d. Transform your anger:

i. A soft Answer: **Proverbs 15:1 (NKJV) 1** A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

ii. Do Good to them: **Proverbs 25:21–22 (NIV) 21** If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. **22** In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

iii. Pray for them: **Matthew 5:44 (NIV) 44** But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,