



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

LETTING GO OF ANGER

Part 1: Are You Angry?

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:26-32 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 3:12 | Proverbs 14:17; 15:1, 18; 16:32; 22:24-25 | Ecclesiastes 7:9 | Matthew 21:13-14; 23:13-33 | Luke 23:34 | Mark 3:2-5

SUMMARY:

Anger can be either good or bad.

Righteous anger motivates us to fight for the truth, defend the weak, or advance the kingdom of God. Unholy anger is rooted in selfishness, such as a reaction to an insult or disappointment. It devastates marriages, separates children and parents, and poisons business relationships. This type of hostility can even affect our health. That's why Paul instructed us, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:26-27). The apostle encouraged believers to deal quickly with anger before it could take its toll on their lives. Let's explore what the Bible says about this powerful emotion.

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

Anger Defined

Anger is a strong feeling of intense displeasure, hostility, or indignation as a result of a real or imagined threat, insult, frustration, or injustice towards yourself or others important to you. It falls into one of three categories. 1) *Rage*: an explosive, uncontrolled expression of anger. 2) *Resentment*: unexpressed anger. When people try to deny their hostility, resentment is the result. This type of anger will destroy them from the inside out. That's one reason why the Bible instructs us to address conflicts quickly (Eph. 4:26). 3) *Indignation*: righteous anger about a wrong that another person is suffering or a situation that is unholy. God's anger falls into this category.

Anger in Scripture

The Old Testament books of wisdom provide some of the best verses on this subject. From Proverbs, we learn that "a quick-tempered man acts foolishly" (14:17), and "a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). Proverbs 16:32 says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city." Those who are slow to anger may still become upset, but they control their emotions rather than letting anger turn to rage.

The Bible also cautions us against entering a close friendship, business partnership, or marriage with someone who can not control himself or herself. Proverbs 22:24-25 says, "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself." Ecclesiastes 7:9 tells us that "anger resides in the bosom of fools." You and I need to instruct our children and grandchildren about the importance of associating with those who can hold their tempers. That advice may save them from a lifetime of heartache.

Anger plays an important role in many well-known Bible stories. The first person to become angry was Adam, who bitterly blamed Eve for their sin (Gen. 3:12). Cain killed his brother because of jealousy over Abel's acceptable offering. Moses was upset at the Israelites for their lack of trust in the Lord. Saul's hostility towards David began with envy over the younger man's success in battle. Jonah became angry when God showed mercy to Ninevah. And Peter violently defended Christ in the garden of Gethsemane—cutting off a man's ear.

Causes of Anger

There are a number of common reasons for this emotion. 1) *Not getting our way*: Some people grow angry when they lose control of a situation. 2) *Feeling rejected*: Being excluded, overlooked, or mistreated can stir up hostility. 3) *Loss*: Losing what we cherish, or simply fearing that loss, can make us angry. 4) *Disappointment*: Unmet expectations can lead to anger. 5) *Injustice*: When we see people mistreated, we can become indignant on their behalf. 6) *Feeling inadequate*: Comparing our lives to those of others may upset us. Any one of these causes—along with a host of others—can cause anger.

Good vs. Bad Anger

The Bible reveals the Father and the Son expressing holy anger. Since we know that God is perfect and just, His anger can not be unrighteous. The Lord became angry with the Israelites for marrying foreign women. He knew that their wives would introduce the worship of pagan gods. Jesus angrily rebuked the Pharisees on their legalistic and unmerciful interpretations of God's laws (Mark 3:2-5). In a scathing speech, He accused them of hypocrisy because they had unclean hearts but pretended to be holy. (Matt. 23:13-33). His indignation at how they were using the temple as a means of growing wealthy led Him to turn over their tables and chase them from His Father's house (Matt. 21:13-14). You and I can have holy anger when we become upset because of how someone else is treated or if we are motivated to resolve an unholy situation.

Selfish anger is unjustified. Most of our anger is unrighteous because it is motivated by self-interest. For instance, if someone hurts your feelings, you don't have a right to hold that against them. You must forgive that person. Unrighteous anger generally takes one of two forms. *Powder keg anger* is explosive. It usually takes those in its path—such as a spouse—by surprise. Even worse is *crock pot anger*, which simmers and boils for a long time. Some people may be in complete denial that they are angry, or they might take pride in their ability to control themselves. But

denied anger is like a poison spiritually, emotionally, *and* physically. In time, it will destroy you.

A Five-fold Test for Anger

Ask yourself these questions to see if you are harboring unrighteous anger:

- *Is my anger directed toward another person?* Try to identify the individual.
- *Is it without a justifiable cause?* If your anger is selfish, you simply need to forgive that person.
- *Am I seeking vengeance?* If you have a desire to “get them back,” or harm them in some way for what they did, you are not operating according to biblical principles.
- *Am I cherishing anger?* You might resist surrendering your frustration to the Lord. Maybe on some level, you want to be upset. Unless you release it to God, however, you will be unable to experience the freedom He longs to give you.
- *Do I have an unforgiving spirit?* Perhaps you feel that you just can't lay down your anger. But with the Lord's help, I'm confident you can.

CONCLUSION:

Unrighteous anger ruins lives if it is left unchecked. It destroys marriages, families, and other relationships. It hinders our fellowship with God and stifles our joy. That's why believers must carefully avoid associating with those who are quick to anger. We should also examine our lives to make sure this emotion does not hold us in bondage.

While suffering a horrible death on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). Let's follow His example and graciously forgive anyone who offends us. That way, you and I will be free to enjoy the abundant life God has planned for us. ✨



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