



# Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

## LETTING GO OF ANGER

### Part 2: Consequences of Anger

**KEY PASSAGE:** Ephesians 4:26-27 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 5:23-24 | Luke 23:34

#### SUMMARY:

**Only foolish people fail to consider the effects of their choices in life.**

Every action, great or small, has a consequence. Yet many people don't realize the cost of holding on to anger. They may imagine that if their grudge is justified, they have a right to nurture it. Harboring anger is an understandable reaction to life's hurts and disappointments, but the effects of unforgiveness are devastating. Few people realize that anger takes a horrible toll on our relationships, health, and fellowship with God. That's why the Bible instructs us to deal quickly with this potentially destructive emotion.

#### SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

##### Anger Defined

This emotion 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.* There are three types of anger. 1) *Rage* is usually an explosive expression of anger. 2) *Resentment* is repressed or suppressed anger. 3) *Indignation* is righteous anger over a wrong someone else has suffered or an unjust situation.

##### A Three-fold Warning

In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul gives some guidelines about handling hostility. First, he says we are to "be angry, and sin not." In other words, don't give in to rage and resentment towards another person. Second, he cautions us, "Do not let the

sun go down on your anger." God does not want us going to bed without dealing with the anger we felt that day. Third, the apostle says, "Do not give the devil an opportunity." Tragically, you and I sometimes become upset unnecessarily because we misunderstood another person's comment. No matter what the cause, this destructive emotion gives Satan a foothold in our lives.

##### The Consequences of Anger

■ **To ourselves:** The most obvious and immediate effect of unjust anger in our lives *is broken fellowship with God.* Jesus said, "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matt. 5:23-24). We can't be angry with another individual and at peace with the Lord. *Your relationships with other people will suffer.* For example, a marriage will not thrive if one or both spouses become angry and refuse to address the problem. *You will develop a critical spirit.* Bitter people often become judgmental in an effort to justify their anger. *You will lack peace.* Hostility makes you restless and robs you of joy. *Anger leads to emotional isolation.* When people get hurt, they often try to protect themselves from further hurt by pushing others away. *Anger results in frustration and anxiety.* It distorts your thinking. You may come to expect betrayal or constantly question the motives of those who are kind to you. *It leaves you feeling empty.* God designed us for relationships. When we

cut ourselves off from friendships in order to prevent further hurt, He allows us to feel lonely.

The consequences of anger are far-reaching. It can cause you to become narrow in mind and heart. You begin to criticize and belittle others—perhaps through joking—but the barbs are real. *Anger sometimes manifests itself through chronic tardiness.* By being late, people seek to demonstrate that no one can tell them what to do. *Hostility can make you disagreeable.* In other words, if you have unresolved anger, it can make you argumentative with everyone, not just the person who offended you. *Anger can make you sloppy on the job.* You may begin to justify failing to look your best, do your best, and be your best at work. *Anger can cause you to lose your enthusiasm.* You may withdraw from social activities or lose your excitement for your hobbies and passions. *Hostility, if left unchecked, results in procrastination.* It diminishes your ability to concentrate so you are less likely to complete tasks. *Anger can contribute to obesity* because people try to comfort themselves through food. *It also prevents genuine sexual intimacy in marriage.*

■ **To our health:** God did not design the human body to live with unresolved, unrighteous anger. In the short term, it increases your adrenalin level, heart rate, and blood pressure. Your mouth may become dry and your palms can get sweaty. Your stomach often tenses, interrupting digestion, while blood rushes to supply your muscles with extra energy.

Chronic rage or resentment, over the long term, contributes to ulcers, hypertension, heart disease, heart attacks, and stroke. It can result in crippling arthritis and severe depression. In short, every system of your body is at risk of being affected. Initially, you may not feel these devastating effects of anger, but in time, it can destroy you. When you're tempted to become bitter, ask yourself, "Is that offense worthy of my getting a chronic illness? Is it worth dying over?"

■ **To other people:** Anger also affects almost everyone in our lives. When people are upset, they typically vent their frustration on those closest to them, hurting them in the process.

Resentment separates close friendships and other relationships. It's often a factor in divorce. Rage can result in physical damage to the belongings of others and, sometimes, take the lives of innocent people. When you are tempted to take your anger out on others, remember that Jesus forgave those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). Since none of us have experienced anything as horrible as what Christ suffered, we should be willing to forgive those who sin against us.

■ **To God:** You may be surprised to learn that your unrighteous anger affects the Lord. First, it grieves His heart. Hostility does not fit who we are as children of God. Second, it hinders His work. Those who harbor resentment are often not willing to obey His voice. Third, the Father will not pour out His blessing on an angry person. Unresolved and deep-seeded bitterness can destroy us. But through prayer and reading His Word, you and I can defuse this controlling, damaging emotion.

## CONCLUSION:

Perhaps someone abandoned you, insulted you, or embarrassed you in some fashion. Maybe you've been holding a grudge for weeks, months, or even years. Regardless of its cause, unrighteous hostility is a destructive force.

I encourage you to think about how anger will affect you, your relationships with others, and your fellowship with God. Evaluate whether the offense is worth all the negative consequences it will introduce in your life and the lives of others. If you are willing to forgive instead, you will experience healing. Forgiveness might save your job, your marriage, or your relationship with a loved one. One thing is for certain: letting go of anger will keep you from self-destruction. Why not give it a try today? 🙏



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