



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

LETTING GO OF ANGER

Part 3: How to Handle Anger

KEY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:29-32 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 103:8 | Proverbs 22:24-25; 30:33
Matthew 21:13-14; 23:13-33 | Mark 3:2-5 | Luke 23:34 | Ephesians 4:26-27 | Colossians 3:12 | James 1:19

SUMMARY:

What does it take to make you angry?

Does the slightest insult or off-hand remark make you upset? Or does the problem have to be really big before you get mad? I believe the measure of a person is the size of the offense that makes him or her angry.

Of course, anger itself is not sinful. Many biblical characters, including the Lord Jesus, became upset, so we know it's not always wrong. Our reaction, however, can be sinful. When we respond to anger in inappropriate ways, we can bring emotional, physical, and spiritual devastation on ourselves and others. How then, should we handle this powerful emotion in a way that will please the Lord?

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

How do people handle anger?

Most of us respond in unhealthy ways. You and I may repress it by denying that it exists. Or we suppress it—recognize that it's there but refuse to deal with it. Others respond the opposite way, in harsh outbursts. These individuals may make excuses for themselves, saying, "This is how God made me" or "I just have a short fuse." The right response to anger is to exercise self-control through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How *should* we deal with anger?

■ **Confess it.** Denying your feelings will only cause you to stay angry longer. Remember,

whether or not you acknowledge the emotion, its poison will continue to affect you. Those who harbor anger will never know the fullness of peace and joy that our relationship with Jesus Christ can bring us.

■ **Identify the nature and source of it.** Where did the anger begin? If you don't identify the root of the problem, you could show malice towards someone who did nothing wrong. For instance, people who were abused by one of their parents sometimes resent all authority figures, including pastors and teachers.

■ **Purpose to deal with it quickly.** Ephesians 4:26-27 says, "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." Satan wants you to dwell on your feelings and let them grow. But God asks you to deal with anger. In some instances of extreme pain and suffering—for instance, a drunk driver kills your son or daughter—you won't be able to get rid of your anger before the sun sets. But you should acknowledge your feelings and decide that you will deal with them. You shouldn't just accept rage as a natural response and allow it to become part of your life.

■ **Do not sin.** It is possible to get angry but not do anything wrong (Eph. 4:26). In fact, this emotion can motivate us to take necessary action or right a wrong. Jesus became angry with the money changers in the temple (Matt. 21:13-14) and with the Pharisees who imposed religious laws on the people in order to stay in power (Matt. 23:13-33; Mark 3:2-5). The one time when Christ should have been the angriest—on the

cross—He chose to forgive instead (Luke 23:34).

■ **Take a time out.** When you start to become angry, visualize a stop sign. Make a purposeful decision not to react quickly, because your first impulse will likely be an unwise one. Give the other person time to talk. Then you will be able to respond in a godly fashion. The Holy Spirit will give you discernment into why he or she is so upset. We should strive to be “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry” (James 1:19; see also Psalm 103:8).

■ **Clarify and analyze the situation.** It’s helpful to understand why other people are angry with you. Has somebody hurt them? Are they frustrated? Are they feeling insecure? Are they jealous? Are they fatigued? You can use similar questions to analyze your own feelings as well. Getting to the root of the problem will help you know how to address it.

■ **Deal with the problem.** Proverbs 30:33 says, “The churning of milk produces butter, and pressing the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of anger produces strife.” When this emotion is unchecked, it will turn into bitterness. So even if you can’t immediately get rid of your anger, make a commitment to seek healing.

■ **Ventilate.** Some psychologists believe it’s healthier to express anger freely—without worrying about how it may hurt others—rather than hold it in. But as believers, we are called to a higher standard. We must carefully consider how our words will affect those around us. So I recommend venting to the Lord. Get on your knees in a private place and tell God exactly how you feel. He will begin to work in your heart and draw you toward forgiveness.

■ **Put it away.** Ephesians 4:31 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.” In Greek, the word we translate as “put away” means *lift up and toss* or *strip away*. We should “put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Col. 3:12). Both of these actions are possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

■ **Replace it.** Harness the energy that anger gives you. Use it to wax your car, hit golf balls at the driving range, or clean out a closet.

■ **Determine the benefits.** The positive side of anger is that it can motivate us to take constructive action, such as fixing problems and righting wrongs.

■ **Prevent a wrong response from reoccurring.** We can’t always avoid anger, but we can control how we respond to it. Decide ahead of time how you will act in challenging situations. Purpose to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

■ **Stay away from angry people.** Proverbs 22:24 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.” Don’t begin relationships with those who are constantly angry.

CONCLUSION:

Our world is full of injustice, hurt, and rejection. People cut us off on the highway, betray our confidence, or harm those we love. It’s impossible for us to avoid all the causes of anger. However, you and I can choose to respond to this powerful emotion in a way that will honor the Lord. When believers deal with anger correctly, we can maximize its benefits and minimize its destructive qualities.

If you feel angry right now, I pray that you won’t wait to deal with it. Confess to the Lord your rage or resentment, and ask Him to help you become free. I believe God will show you how to release your feelings to Him. And when His Holy Spirit enables you to extend forgiveness to others, you will enjoy the supernatural peace and joy God desires for all His children. ✨



To purchase the message for these Life Principles Notes on CD or DVD, please visit www.intouchbookstore.org.