

## Anger

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In the book of Hebrews, the writer instructed saints to, “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). This text calls attention to the personal nature of sin. Sin is not an abstraction. Sin is something that affects everyone.

This passage describes sin clinging closely to us. Sin can wrap tightly around us. The tight grip of sin can strangle the life out of us. Sin can restrict us from running the race of life. Sin can easily redirect our lives away from God and onto a dangerous course. Therefore, we must lay aside sin.

Sin can manifest itself in many besetting forms. One common form of sin is anger. Anger clings closely to us. It can seemingly come out of nowhere at a moment’s notice. One second we are quietly going about our day and the next we are transformed into something unrecognizable to ourselves. When the moment passes and calm is regained, we are amazed by what anger caused us to do.

There are many reasons we carry anger. It can stem from our upbringing. It can come from resentment or selfishness. Anger can be an uncontrolled release of stress. Anger can come from loss. Anger is commonly identified as a stage of grief. Anger can come from experiencing an injustice.

### Anger in Proverbs

Anger can come from many places and experiences. Regardless, we must learn how to control our anger and redirect it in productive purposes. Consider why anger is dangerous.

**1. Anger reveals foolishness.** No one wants to be thought of as a fool. When we react uncontrollably, we show our foolishness. This damages our influence.

*“A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated...Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly” (Prov. 14:17, 29).*

**2. Anger thrives in other sins.** When we lose control of our emotions, more sins are likely to be committed. We will likely say hurtful things. We may become destructive to property. We may even harm ourselves or others.

*“A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression” (Prov. 29:22).*

**3. Anger produces strife.** As Christians, we are to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9). Paul described our work as a “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18). We are to live in harmony with one another. Anger destroys peace. Anger creates strife, contention, and chaos.

*“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention” (Prov. 15:18).*

**4. Anger is overwhelming.** Anger consumes the heart and clouds the mind. It prevents us from foreseeing the damage our actions will cause. It can hinder us from seeking reconciliation.

*“Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?” (Prov. 27:4).*

**5. Anger creates vulnerability.** When we are unable to make rational decisions, we are in a vulnerable position. Anger primes us for the devil to take advantage of our weakness.

*“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls” (Prov. 25:28).*

**6. Anger is isolating.** Most people do not want to be around an angry person. There is constant tension with an angry person. They might explode at the slightest thing. Anger is not an inviting quality. The Bible tells us to avoid those who are angry.

*“Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare” (Prov. 22:24-25).*

### **Controlling Our Anger**

We all have been angry. We all can identify with the wisdom and warnings expressed in the book of Proverbs. As with any sin, we must consider what to do before the sin manifests. When our anger is unleashed, we are too late to develop a coping strategy.

**1. Learn to listen.** We cannot productively communicate when we are angry. Often, our anger is stirred when we learn about an unpleasant event. Without learning about the context of the event or the people involved, we rashly draw conclusions. James wisely instructed, “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19-20).

**2. Talk to someone trusted.** Stress is a major contributing factor to anger. Pride deceives us into thinking that we must handle our problems independently. As the pressures of our responsibility build inside, eventually, we explode. Often, our families incur the force of our explosion after a long, trying day.

Being able to talk through our problems is vital. Talking can release our tension in a constructive way, rather than by a harmful outburst of anger. Talking to someone trusted may draw out helpful advice. Solomon wrote, “A soft answer turns away wrath...” (Prov. 15:1). The person we talk to can calm us and point us in a positive direction.

**3. React constructively.** Problems stir our anger; yet, problems demand solutions. Anger does nothing to solve our problems. If anything, anger makes our problems worse. We can be

angry about various situations in life. When sin is involved, we are to be angry (Eph. 4:26). However, anger is not a constructive solution to sin. Redemptive love is.

### **Conclusion**

We are running the race of life. Like well-trained athletes, we must discipline our emotions. Anger is a besetting emotion. We cannot eliminate it. Instead, we must learn to harness our anger and redirect anger's intensity into productive channels.