

Controlling Anger

"They make me so mad! They make me so angry!" People say that all the time. We have all probably said that. I admit that I have said that. But I suggest that no one can **make** you mad or angry. You **allow** yourself to get angry. You can control your reactions and responses to people and situations. That is why the Bible calls it **self-control**. This lesson is all about **controlling** anger.

Why do people get angry? Not getting our way; losing control; feeling rejected, excluded, betrayed, or mistreated; loss of health, job, or a loved one; unmet or unrealistic expectations; injustice.

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. Anger can be good or bad.

People can display three types of anger.

1. **Rage** is usually an explosive, uncontrolled expression of anger. This powder keg anger is very dangerous in people who have a short fuse. They can blow up with a minor provocation.
2. **Resentment** is unexpressed anger when it is repressed by denying it or suppressed by holding it in. This crock pot anger simmers in a person like an emotional pressure cooker. It often leads to passive aggressive behaviors. When people try to deny their hostility, resentment is the result. This type of anger will destroy a person from the inside out. That is one reason the Bible says to resolve anger quickly. **Ephesians 4:26-27** says "Be angry, and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."
3. **Indignation** is righteous anger about a wrong that another person is suffering or an unjust or unholy situation. God's and Christ's anger is this type.

What are possible harmful results of anger?

Read **Psalms 37:8; Proverb 19:19**.

Stay away from angry people - **Proverb 22:24-25**. Anger can be contagious.

1. Angry people are not reasonable. You cannot win an argument with an angry person.
2. You can risk bodily harm dealing with angry people. Angry people can be dangerous. Cain's anger led to murder - **Genesis 4:6-8**.
3. Angry words hurt - **Proverb 15:1; Ephesians 6:4**.
From childhood we all heard that "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But that old saying is not true. The sting of angry words may last a lifetime in one's heart. Anger hurts others, especially those we love the most.
Resist the temptation to "tell them off." Remember the words in the song, Angry Words.
4. Anger can affect your marriage (domestic violence), children (abuse), friends, work, driving (road rage), church, health, and your relationship with God.
5. Uncontrolled anger or a quick temper hurts leadership - **Proverb 15:18; 29:22; 30:33**.
A quick temper disqualifies a man from becoming a church elder - **Titus 1:7**.
I know a church leader who got angry in a church business meeting and had a heart attack in the church building.
6. Anger and sickness are sometimes related - **Ecclesiastes 5:17** says "All his days he also eats in darkness. And he has much sorrow and sickness and anger."
7. People sometimes get mad when the truth is taught. They are stubborn or close their mind because their mind is already made up - **Luke 4:28; 6:11; Acts 19:28; Jeremiah 36:23**.

Can you be angry without sinning?

Psalm 4:4 says "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still."

Jesus got angry but did not sin - **Mark 3:5; 11:15-17; John 2:14-16.**

Sometimes a blazing rebuke against sin is needed. And we should feel outraged when people are mistreated and God is rejected. But don't use it as an excuse for self-centered irritation. We can express anger at the right time, in the right way, and for the right reasons.

How can you determine whether your anger is sinful? Ask yourself:

1. Are you angry toward a person or because of what the person did?
2. Do you have all the facts and understand the situation?
3. Is your anger for a justified cause?
4. Does your anger seek to harm another person?
5. Is your anger helping or hurting the situation?
6. Do you hold an unforgiving spirit?
7. Can you turn it over to God and sleep at night?

How to Control Your Anger. Take these steps to deal with anger.

1. Confess (vent) your anger to God or the poison will continue to affect you. Is it ok to let God know when you are angry with Him? You might as well. He knows it anyway.
2. Identify the type and the source of your anger. Think about where and how your anger began.
3. Decide to deal with it quickly - **Ephesians 4:26**. Resolve your anger the same day. Don't go to sleep angry. Dwelling on feelings make them grow.
4. Take an emotional time out. Slow down your angry feelings. Don't let off steam by blowing your top. Don't react. Think out your response before you speak or act.
Counting to 10 is good advice - **James 1:19-20; Proverb 14:29; 19:11; Romans 12:19**.
5. Other steps may include relaxation, improved communication, problem-solving, humor, and counseling.
6. Put away anger - **Ephesians 4:31-32**. Harness the energy that anger gives you. Some people use the excuse that they are just "high strung." If you are a high strung person, would you rather be a high strung thoroughbred race horse under control or an out of control bucking bronco? How do the commands in verse **32** help you let go of the feelings and actions in verse **31**?
7. Let Christ control your life. Replace your outbursts of anger or fits of rage with the fruit of the Spirit - **Galatians 5:19-23**. You cannot hold anger in your heart and be right with God.

Take Action

How you respond to anger is up to you. Our responses to anger can be summed up in five words beginning with the letter B. You can blame others, blow up, bury it, grow bitter, or benefit from it. The choice is yours.