

Looking through the Lens of Anger

*“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”
(Ephesians 4:26–27)*

- Anger is appropriate at certain times.
- Anger must be resolved, or it becomes sinful.
- Anger can be curtailed.
- Anger, if not stopped, can be used by Satan.
- Anger, if prolonged, gives ground to Satan.

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.”
(Ephesians 4:29–30)*

- Anger can lead to unwholesome talk.
- Anger can grieve the Holy Spirit.
- Anger can be totally cancelled.
- Anger becomes sin when it results in bitterness.
- Anger must be eradicated before it turns to rage.
- Anger must be let go before it leads to fighting.
- Anger must be overcome before it leads to slander.
- Anger must be mastered before it becomes malicious.
- Anger can be conquered through kindness and compassion.
- Anger can be fought and defeated through forgiveness.

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:31–32)*

Questions about Anger

“Is it a sin to be angry?”

No. The initial feeling of anger is a God-given emotion. The way you respond or express these feelings determines whether you have allowed your anger to become sin. The Bible says,

*“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”
(Ephesians 4:26)*

“How can I keep from feeling guilty when I’m angry?”

Your anger is a signal that *something is wrong*—like the red warning light on the dashboard of a car. The purpose of the light is to *propel you to action . . .* to cause you to stop and investigate what is wrong and then to take appropriate action. Jesus became angry at the hypocrisy and stubborn hearts of the religious leaders. As a result, He fully restored a man’s crippled hand on the Sabbath.

*“He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, he said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.”
(Mark 3:5)*

Wrong Belief

“Based on what I believe is fair, I have the right to be angry about the disappointments in my life.”

Right Belief

“Since the Lord is sovereign over my life and I trust Him with my life, I have yielded my rights to Him. My human disappointments are now God’s appointments for Christ to increase my faith and develop His character in me.”

What are the Four Sources?

“What does God want me to do about my inappropriate anger?”²

God wants you to examine the true source of your anger and then evaluate whether you are using anger to try to get your inner needs for love, for significance, and for security met.³

- **Injustice:** Have you been the victim of a real or perceived **injustice**? If so, *evaluate* . . .

Are you using angry, accusatory words to cause someone to feel guilty and obligated to you?

- **Hurt:** Have you been **hurt** by rejection or someone’s unkind words? If so, *evaluate* . . .

Are you using anger to intimidate or coerce someone into remaining in a relationship with you?

- **Fear:** Has something occurred that causes you to have **fear**? If so, *evaluate* . . .

Are you using anger to overpower and control someone in order to get your way?

- **Frustration:** Do you feel a sense of **frustration** because of unmet expectations? If so, *evaluate* . . .

Are you using angry threats and shaming words to manipulate someone to meet your demands?

In searching your heart, decide that you will not use anger to try to get your needs met. Instead, enter into a deeper dependence on the Lord to meet these God-given needs.

*“In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”
(Psalm 4:4)*

Do You Have Certain Demands?

“You should. . . . You ought. . . . You must. . . . You better not!” Give up your dialogue of demands. Yield your “right” to have everything your way.

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”
(Philippians 4:4)*

How to Resolve Past Anger⁴

- **Realize Your Inappropriate Anger.**

“All a man’s ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart.” (Proverbs 21:2)

- **Revisit Your Root—The Source(s).**

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
(Psalm 139:23–24)*

- **Receive God’s Love.**

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1)

- **Release Your Rights.**

— Confess that harboring anger in your heart is sin.

— Give your desire for revenge to God.

— Refuse to hold on to your past hurts by releasing them to God.

— Pray for God to work in the life of the one who has

wronged you and to change your heart toward that person.

— Release the one who hurt you into the hands of God—forgive as God forgave you!

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

- **Rejoice in God’s Purpose.**

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” (Romans 8:28–29)

- **Restore the Relationship, When Appropriate.**

“If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23–24)

- **Reflect Christ’s Love.**

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” (John 13:34)

How to Handle Present Anger

Anger is one letter short of *danger*. This saying is more than a catchy phrase; these words reflect the painful truth. And because too many times the tongue has not been tamed, conversations have escalated out of control.

- **Acknowledge Your Anger.**

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

- **Abandon Your Demands.**

Instead of demanding that others meet your inner needs for love, for significance, and for security, learn to look to the Lord to meet your needs.

— “Lord, though I would like to feel more **love** from others, I know that You love me unconditionally.”

“The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’” (Jeremiah 31:3)

— “Lord, though I would like to feel more **significant** to those around me, I know I am significant in Your eyes.”

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)

— “Lord, though I wish I felt more **secure** in my relationships, I know I am secure in my relationship with You.”

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)

— “Lord, though I wish others would be responsive to my needs, I know You have promised to meet all my needs.”

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3)

Questions and Answers

“I was severely wronged by someone I once trusted. People want me to forgive. How can I possibly ignore my anger and simply let my offender off the hook?”

Picture a hook attached to your collarbone. Then imagine your offender and all the pain that this person has caused you attached to that hook. Do you really want to carry that person and all that pain with you for the rest of your life?

The Lord wants you to take the anger and pain from the past and release it into His hands. Then take the one who hurt you off your emotional hook and place your offender onto God’s hook. The Lord knows how to deal justly and effectively with all those who bring pain into your life. He says,

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.”
(Romans 12:19)

Prayer to Release Your Anger

“Lord Jesus, thank You for caring about how much my heart has been hurt. You know the pain I have felt because of (list every offense). Right now I release all that pain into Your hands. And as an act of my will, I choose to forgive (name). Right now, I move (name) off of my emotional hook onto Your hook. I trust that in Your time and in Your way You will deal with (name) as You see fit. And Lord, thank You for giving me Your power to release my anger to You so that I can be set free.

In Your holy name I pray. Amen.”

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
(Colossians 3:13)

Related to Anger . . .

- Conflict Resolution: *Solving Your People Problems*
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Although the editors have sought to eliminate errors, some may have been overlooked. The considerate reader would render us a great service by calling our attention to such inaccuracies.

1. H. Norman Wright, *Anger* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980), audiocassette, James Mahoney, *Dealing with Anger* (Dallas: Rapha, n.d.), audiocassette; Wright, *Anger*.

2. H. Norman Wright, *Anger*.

3. For the three God-given inner needs, see Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., *Understanding People: Deep Longings for Relationship*, Ministry Resources Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 15–16; Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance*, 2nd ed. (Houston, TX: Rapha, 1990), 27–30.

4. Russell Kelfer, *Tough Choices: Secrets to Bringing Self Under Control from the Book of Proverbs* (San Antonio, TX: Into His Likeness, 1991), 65–73; Oliver and Wright, *When Anger Hits Home*, 97.