

BEN WASHINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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# **BIBLE STUDY**

## **Topical Bible Study** **Dealing with Anger and Actions**

Dr. Michael Oyedokun II, Pastor



# DEALING WITH ANGER AND ACTIONS

## **Ephesians 4:26**

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:”

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In understanding this command, it's good to differentiate emotions from actions. We all feel emotion. At various times, we feel sadness, grief, frustration, excitement, happiness, and anger. Such feelings come naturally and are not sinful in and of themselves. It is how we act on those emotions that can be sinful. Emotion is internal and not directed against people. Action is external and can be directed positively or negatively toward others.

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**Here is the context of the verse:** “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ‘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. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 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, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 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 4:25–32).

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Handling anger is an important life skill. Christian counselors report that 50 percent of people who come in for counseling have problems dealing with anger. Anger can shatter communication and tear apart relationships, and it ruins both the joy and health of many. Sadly, people tend to justify their anger instead of accepting responsibility for it. **Everyone struggles, to varying degrees, with anger.** Thankfully, God's Word contains principles regarding how to handle anger in a godly manner, and how to overcome sinful anger.

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Anger is **not always sin**. There is a type of anger of which the Bible approves, often called “**righteous indignation.**”

God is angry (Psalm 7:11; Mark 3:5), and it is acceptable for believers to be angry (Ephesians 4:26).

Two Greek words in the New Testament are translated as “anger.”

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One means “**passion, energy**” and the other means “**agitated, boiling.**”

Biblically, anger is God-given energy intended to help us solve problems.

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Examples of biblical anger include David's being upset over hearing Nathan the prophet sharing an injustice (2 Samuel 12) and Jesus' anger over how some of the Jews had defiled worship at God's temple in Jerusalem (John 2:13-18).

Notice that neither of these examples of anger involved self-defense, but a defense of others or of a principle.

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## Bible Examples of Acceptable Anger

- **Psalm 7:11** – God is angry with the wicked every day.
- **Exodus 11:4-8** – In Egypt Moses acted as God's spokesman, yet spoke in great anger.
- **Exodus 32:19-24** – When Moses saw Israel worshiping the calf, his anger became hot.
- **Numbers 16:15** – When men rebelled against Moses' leadership, he was very angry.
- **Mark 3:5** – Jesus looked on the Jews in anger, being grieved at their hardness of heart.
- **2 Corinthians 7:11** – When Corinth disciplined a fornicator, Paul praised their indignation.
- **Ephesians 4:26** – Be angry, and do not sin.

Some anger is justified. But note that every case listed above involves being angry at sin.

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That being said, it is important to recognize that anger at an injustice inflicted against oneself is also appropriate. Anger has been said to be a **warning flag**—it alerts us to those times when others are attempting to or have violated our boundaries. God cares for each individual. Sadly, we do not always stand up for one another, meaning that sometimes we must stand up for ourselves.

This is especially important when considering the anger that victims often feel.

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Victims of abuse, violent crime, or the like have been violated in some way. Often while experiencing the trauma, they do not experience anger. Later, in working through the trauma, anger will emerge. For a victim to reach a place of true health and forgiveness, he or she must first accept the trauma for what it was. In order to fully accept that an act was unjust, one must sometimes experience anger.

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Because of the complexities of trauma recovery, this anger is often not short-lived, particularly for victims of abuse. Victims should process through their anger and come to a place of acceptance, even forgiveness. **This is often a long journey.** As God heals the victim, the victim's emotions, including anger, will follow. **Allowing the process to occur does not mean the person is living in sin.**

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**\*\*Is ANGER a sign of weakness?\***

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**Relevant Focus** – When I was in China...the manner that they drove scared me. They didn't respect others in their lane, cut each other off, etc. I asked the escort, “don't you get upset when that happens? Her reply is that for their culture...anger is a sign of weakness!”

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Anger can become sinful when it is motivated by **pride** (James 1:20), when it is **unproductive** and thus distorts God's purposes (1 Corinthians 10:31), or when anger is **allowed to linger** (Ephesians 4:26-27).

One obvious sign that anger has turned to sin is when, **instead of attacking the problem at hand, we attack the wrongdoer.**

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Ephesians 4:15-19 says we are to speak the truth in love and use our words to build others up, not allow rotten or destructive words to pour from our lips. Unfortunately, this poisonous speech is a common characteristic of fallen man (Romans 3:13-14).

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**Anger becomes sin when it is allowed to boil over without restraint, resulting in a scenario in which hurt is multiplied (Proverbs 29:11), leaving devastation in its wake.**

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Often, the consequences of out-of-control anger are **irreparable**. Anger also becomes sin when the angry one refuses to be pacified, holds a grudge, or keeps it all inside (Ephesians 4:26-27). This can cause **depression** and **irritability** over *little things*, which are often unrelated to the underlying problem.

We can handle anger biblically by recognizing and admitting our prideful anger and/or our wrong handling of anger as sin (Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9). This confession should be both to God and to those who have been hurt by our anger. We should not minimize the sin by excusing it or blame-shifting.

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**We can handle anger biblically by seeing God in the trial.**

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This is especially important when people have done something to offend us. James 1:2-4, Romans 8:28-29, and Genesis 50:20 all point to the fact that God is **sovereign** over every circumstance and person that crosses our path.

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*Nothing happens to us that He does not cause or allow.*

Though God does allow bad things to happen, He is always faithful to redeem them for the good of His people. God is a good God (Psalm 145:8, 9, 17). Reflecting on this truth until it moves from our heads to our hearts will alter how we react to those who hurt us.

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We can handle anger **biblically** by making room for **God's wrath**. This is especially important in cases of injustice, when “evil” men abuse “innocent” people. Genesis 50:19 and Romans 12:19 both tell us to not play God. God is righteous and just, and we can trust Him who knows all and sees all to act justly (Genesis 18:25).

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**Genesis 50:19** – “And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?”

**Romans 12:19** – “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

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We can handle anger biblically by returning **good for evil** (Genesis 50:21; Romans 12:21). This is key to converting our anger into love. As our actions flow from our hearts, so also our hearts can be altered by our actions (Matthew 5:43-48). That is, we can change our feelings toward another by changing how we choose to act toward that person.

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We can handle anger biblically by **communicating** to solve the problem.

There are four basic rules of communication shared in Ephesians 4:15, 25-32:

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**1) Be honest and speak** (Ephesians 4:15, 25). People cannot read our minds. We must speak the truth in love.

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**2) Stay current** (Ephesians 4:26-27). We must not allow what is bothering us to build up until we lose control. It is important to deal with what is bothering us before it reaches critical mass.

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**3) Attack the problem, not the person** (Ephesians 4:29, 31). Along this line, we must remember the importance of keeping the volume of our voices low (Proverbs 15:1).

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**4) Act, don't react** (Ephesians 4:31-32). Because of our fallen nature, our first impulse is often a sinful one (v. 31). The time spent in “counting to ten” should be used to reflect upon the godly way to respond (v. 32) and to remind ourselves how the energy anger provides should be used to solve problems and not create bigger ones.

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At times we can handle anger preemptively by putting up stricter boundaries. We are told to be discerning (1 Corinthians 2:15-16; Matthew 10:16). We need not "cast our pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). Sometimes our anger leads us to recognize that certain people are **unsafe** for us. We can still forgive them, but we may choose not to re-enter the relationship.

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Finally, we must act to solve our part of the problem (Romans 12:18). We cannot control how others act or respond, but we can make the changes that need to be made on our part. Overcoming a temper is not accomplished overnight. But through prayer, Bible study, and reliance upon God's Holy Spirit, **ungodly anger** can be overcome. We may have allowed anger to become entrenched in our lives by habitual practice, but we can also practice responding correctly until that, too, becomes a habit and God is glorified in our response.

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## References:

The Bible, King James Version

<https://www.gotquestions.org/>

# Questions?