

**THE
DANGER
OF
ANGER**

JON REDMOND

Cover Photograph: nickylarson974, “Bomb icon on green background stock illustration,” iStockphoto™ LP, Stock illustration ID: 961232148: May 21, 2018, www.istockphoto.com.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (TLB) are taken from The Living Bible copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

For the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations and parenthesized Scripture references have been placed in italics.

*“It is better to be slow-tempered
than famous; it is better to have
self-control than to control an army.”*

Proverbs 16:32, TLB

Introduction

We live in an angry world. People are agitated, frustrated, upset, and on edge. In my lifetime, I've never seen anything quite like it. Anger has become a way of life for many people. And for others, anger is considered to be a badge of honor. A certain amount of anger, they reason, proves that their cause is just and their convictions are real. It demonstrates their passion.

As we will see, not all anger is bad. Some anger is actually good. Sadly, though, much of the anger we often have is anything but good. It's bad. It's nasty. It's unattractive. And it's not in keeping with who we are as children of God.

I recently came across a little test called, "The Anger Quiz." It was put together by the good people at Gracepoint Wellness.¹ It consists of twenty-five statements that are to be answered either True or False. As I read through the quiz and tried to respond to each statement honestly, I had to admit to myself that anger isn't something I've fully mastered. Sometimes I still struggle with it. Perhaps you do, too. For our purposes here, I've selected ten of the twenty-five statements. They are representative of the rest, and they are a good tool to evaluate how we are doing in the area of anger. I encourage you

to respond to these statements honestly with either a True or False verdict:

The Anger Quiz

1. I don't show my anger about everything that makes me mad, but when I do—look out.

True / False

2. I still get angry when I think of the bad things people did to me in the past.

True / False

3. I fly off the handle easily.

True / False

4. I often find myself having heated arguments with the people who are closest to me.

True / False

5. I sometimes lie awake at night and think about the things that upset me during the day.

True / False

6. I've had trouble on the job because of my temper.

True / False

7. When riled up, I often blurt out things I later regret saying.

True / False

8. When someone says or does something that upsets me, I don't usually say anything at the time, but later I spend a lot of time thinking about the cutting replies I could and should have made.
True / False
9. I find it very hard to forgive someone who has done me wrong.
True / False
10. People really irritate me when they don't believe the way they should, or when they act like they don't have the good sense of a head of lettuce.
True / False

Well, how did you do? If you're like me, you probably had one or two (or maybe three!) True answers. There may be some saints who are living in the "rare air" of anger-free living, but most of us aren't quite there yet. We're still struggling. We're still striving. We're still seeking victory over those unhealthy angry emotions that sometimes trip us up.

What Exactly Is Anger?

It is always helpful to try to *define* a term before actually addressing it. So what exactly is anger? It's one of those things that we feel like

we have a grasp of, but perhaps a few definitions would help.

Webster's Dictionary defines anger as "strong annoyance."² I think we can all relate to that. Sometimes people annoy us. Sometimes circumstances annoy us. Sometimes we annoy ourselves. Those annoyances often result in feelings of anger.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "anger" is "harah," and it literally means "burning." The idea is "to become heated with work."³ When a person is working outside on a hot day, he naturally becomes hot or heated. When a person gets angry, he becomes heated as well...just in a different way. He becomes heated on the inside.

In the New Testament, the Greek language has several words that are translated as the English word "anger." As you begin to study those different words and try to synthesize their meanings, you discover that anger refers to a "natural impulse, or desire, or disposition."⁴ Notice that the "impulse" of anger affects our "disposition." It affects our mood.

Another idea behind the meaning of the word "anger" includes the feelings of seething, raging, and boiling.⁵ We know what those emotions feel

like. We've all experienced something in life that caused us to become heated and even hot on the inside. We could feel the unhealthy emotion of anger boiling up within us. Interestingly, the ancient Greeks considered anger to be "the strongest of all passions."⁶ I think they may have been right.

Understanding How Anger Works

As I have thought about anger, and more specifically about how anger is addressed in the Bible, I have jotted down eight statements that really build upon each other. As we consider these statements, we will hopefully gain a better understanding of how anger works in our lives and how we can control it in the power of the Holy Spirit. If you called me on the phone and said you were having an anger problem and wanted to talk about it, these are some of the thoughts I would share with you:

1. Anger is a natural impulse.

If you sometimes get angry, that doesn't mean that something is wrong with you. It just means you are normal. You are a human being, and as such, you have certain emotions and passions. You have a natural desire to eat, sleep, and interact with others. In the same way, you

have the natural impulse of anger that is part of your emotional make-up. The impulse itself, it should be noted, isn't sinful.

Fear is another natural impulse. It is intended to protect us from danger. But just as we must learn how to deal with fear in an appropriate way, we must also learn how to deal with anger in an appropriate way. Understand, though, that the impulse itself, both of fear and of anger, is normal and natural. We just have to learn how to deal with those *natural* impulses in a *supernatural* way.

2. Anger is a dangerous impulse.

Just because the impulse itself is normal and natural, that doesn't mean that anger isn't dangerous. Left to itself, anger can be very dangerous. Someone has wisely observed that the word "anger" is only one letter short of the word "danger."⁷ Think about that. If you add the letter "d" to "anger," you have "danger." Anytime we feel the impulse of "anger" on the inside of us, we are close to "danger" if we don't handle it appropriately.

The Bible says: "*A hot-tempered person starts fights*" (Proverbs 15:18, NLT). A hot-tempered person is controlled by anger. He allows the impulse of anger to lead to angry

actions. As a result, there's always conflict in his life. First, there's conflict in his own heart, and then there's conflict in his relationships with others.

We have to learn to control the impulse of anger instead of letting it control us. If you think about it, though, we have to control all of our impulses. We have to control the impulse to eat or else we will be overweight. We have to control the impulse of fear or else we will be paralyzed by fear. And we have to control the impulse of anger or else we will find ourselves in dangerous situations.

You might be thinking: "I can't control my anger. I was born with a bad temper, and there's nothing I can do about it." Friend, that's not true. You *can* control your anger, and I'm sure you have in the past.

Have you ever been home with your family when a discussion turned into a disagreement and then the disagreement turned into an argument? You and the other members of your family were speaking rudely (maybe even loudly) towards each other and then the phone rang. You answered the phone with the calmest and happiest voice..."Hello...We're doing great! How are you?...We had a late breakfast and are planning on going to see a movie in a

little while...It's just a great Saturday to be together as a family." While you were saying those words to the caller, your family members looked at you like you were crazy. "How could you be so kind to them," they thought, "when you were being so rude to us?" While that's a good question, the point was nonetheless made: *You demonstrated that you could control your anger.* Your kindness on the phone call proved that.⁸

As Christians, one of the qualities that should be most evident in our lives is self-control. Just as our lives should be characterized by love, joy, and peace, they should also be characterized by self-control (*see Galatians 5:22-23*). The Holy Spirit produces that quality in us as we walk in unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ. As we abide in Christ, He produces the fruit of the Spirit in us...and part of that fruit is self-control (*see John 15:5*).

So the next time you feel the impulse of "anger," remember that you're just one step away from "danger," but you're also just one prayer away from deliverance. Ask God to help you. Refocus your attention. Don't focus on whatever it was that made you mad. Focus instead on God and on how He would want you to respond. You can control your anger. You really can. And God will help you to do so.

3. Anger is a learned behavior.

It's interesting to me that while anger is a *natural impulse*, it can also be a *learned behavior*. Consider these two Bible verses: "*Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul*" (Proverbs 22:24-25). We have to be careful who we associate with. If our closest friends are always "flying off the handle," we might end up following their example. While it's true that "birds of a feather flock together," it's also true that "birds that flock together tend to look a lot alike." So be careful who you let into your inner circle. You'll probably become like them.

We have to be careful who we look up to as well. If our heroes in sports, entertainment, business, and politics are "hot heads," then we might subconsciously begin to imitate their ways. While no one is perfect, we should look up to people who at least *try* to live lives that honor God...and who apologize when they blow it. Let's face it, we all mess up from time to time, but the pattern of our lives (and certainly the desire of our hearts) should be to stay calm, cool, collected, and kind even when the world around us is chaotic, confused, conflicted, and loud. If your hero loses his temper and then apologizes, that's all the more reason to have

him as your hero. If your hero consistently loses his temper and never even blushes over it, that's a sign that you need a new hero.

Let me say a special word to parents. The role of a parent is obviously an influential role. It's filled with challenges, pressures, and responsibilities. But remember this: *You are your child's primary role model.* What they see you do, they will do, too. And what they see you do in *moderation*, they will most likely do in *excess*. It is the nature of most children to push the limits. So you want to make sure that you model for your child the ability to control your temper. And when you mess up, apologize and use it as a teaching moment. They will respect you for that. Again, none of us is perfect. But as you raise your children, teach them how to read, how to add and subtract, how to work, how to drive, how to treat others with respect, and how to manage money...but don't teach them how to lose their temper. Instead, teach them how to *control* their temper.

4. The impulses of anger need to be thoroughly assessed and properly addressed.

When you feel that impulse of anger, ask yourself these questions: *Where is this coming from? Why do I feel this way?* As you try to

identify the cause of your anger, you will eventually (if not immediately) be able to trace it to its source. Is it because someone has wronged you? Then you need to forgive them. Is it because someone is doing something wrong? Then you need to pray for them and take whatever steps might be appropriate to help the situation. Are you angry because something unfair is happening at work? Then trust the Lord with that situation and do the best you can in that work environment until and unless God leads you somewhere else. But don't let that *angry impulse* lead to *impulsive behavior*.

I read something about Abraham Lincoln that really blessed me. The article said that when President Lincoln got angry with a cabinet member or with one of the generals in the Army that instead of acting hastily on the impulse of anger that he would write a letter to that person telling them why he was upset. He would explain in great detail all the things that person had done that had disappointed and upset him. Then, and this was the genius of Lincoln, he would set that letter aside for a while. He would give himself some time to think about that letter before signing it and mailing it. Then, more often than not, he never mailed the letter at all. In time, the impulse of anger passed, and in his better judgment, the letter wasn't really necessary. There were times, to be sure, that he

mailed a letter, but he never mailed one impulsively. He let those impulses subside before he acted.⁹

What a beautiful example of addressing the impulse of anger properly. President Lincoln learned to let some time pass. He learned to let himself cool down. Perhaps he used to meditate on this Bible truth: *“Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them” (Proverbs 29:20, NIV).*

The next time you get angry, assess the cause and address the person or the situation appropriately. And remember Lincoln. He didn’t become the greatest President in American history by accident. He had learned that cooler heads normally prevail. He had noticed that great leaders are able to control their emotions better than the average person. And, by controlling his anger, he was able to turn many of his critics and enemies into some of his closest confidants and friends.¹⁰

5. Some anger needs to be expressed.

The idea that all anger is wrong is not biblical. Some anger is good. Some anger is necessary. Some anger is productive. All anger isn’t sinful.

In the Old Testament, we read that God became angry at certain times, and God, of course, has never sinned. One interesting Bible verse puts it this way: *“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp”* (Numbers 11:1). God became angry with His people because they were complaining about their circumstances instead of trusting Him in the midst of those circumstances.

In the New Testament, we read that Jesus became angry as well. Consider this passage of Scripture:

“And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Step forward.’ Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent. And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and his

*hand was restored as whole as the other”
(Mark 3:1-5).*

Jesus got angry with the religious leaders because they were placing their religious traditions above the well-being of people who were suffering. They were more committed to their rules, regulations, and rituals than they were to helping people who were hurting. Their hearts were cold, hard, and spiritually dead. In the name of God, they were completely insensitive to the needs of this man who had a withered hand. Their hard-heartedness made Jesus angry...and we know that Jesus never sinned (*see Hebrews 4:15*).

In another passage, we read where Jesus went into the temple and saw the merchants and money changers cheating the people. The merchants who sold the oxen, sheep, and doves were overcharging the people and thinking “only of enriching themselves.”¹¹ The money changers were also known to cheat people who had come from other countries and who needed to exchange currencies.¹² This, of course, made Jesus angry. Let’s look at the passage itself:

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money

changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables" (John 2:13-15).

When Jesus got angry because of how the merchants and money changers had turned His Father's house into a place of dishonest business dealings, notice what He did. He made a whip of cords and drove them out. Think about that for a moment. He took the time to take several cords and put them together to make a whip. He probably sat down to do this. Whether He sat or stood, though, He still spent some time making the whip. That means He didn't act impulsively. He didn't lose His temper. He didn't do anything wrong. No, He methodically and carefully made a whip which He used to drive out the merchants and money changers. He didn't strike them with the whip. He simply used the whip to drive them out of the temple. Jesus got angry, but He didn't sin. He expressed His anger in the most appropriate way possible.

We read an interesting statement in the Book of Ephesians. The apostle Paul wrote these words: "*Be angry, and do not sin*" (Ephesians 4:26). It is possible, even necessary at times, to get angry. The key, though, is that we *control*

our anger and properly *channel* our anger so that we don't sin.

If it weren't for healthy and justified anger, Martin Luther never would have pulled away from the established church of his day because of its erroneous teaching that salvation came through the church and from the priest instead of through the cross of Christ and by faith in His shed blood. The heretical teaching of the church angered Luther, and yet he didn't sin. Instead, he led the Protestant Reformation that emphasized the importance of Scripture as our authority, Christ's death as the payment for our sins, and faith in Christ as the means of our salvation. He channeled his anger properly, and the world has never been the same since.

Similarly, if Abraham Lincoln hadn't become angry over the issue of slavery, he never would have abolished that evil practice and freed the slaves. He used his anger in a positive and productive way.

Some things in life make us angry, and they should. Injustices, bullying, lying, dishonesty, hypocrisy, and a thousand other things make us angry. In these cases, we have to learn to channel our anger and use it in the right way. Anger, even justified anger, is never an excuse

to hate people, though, and it is never an excuse to sin.

Some anger needs to be expressed, but it needs to be expressed appropriately. This is certainly true in our relationships with each other. In a marriage relationship, for example, both spouses need to feel the freedom to tell each other how they feel...even if they don't feel the same way on a given issue. Sometimes a spouse does or says something that hurts the feelings of the other spouse. Those hurt feelings are often suppressed because the offended spouse doesn't want to say anything that could cause an argument. So they stuff and suppress their feelings. This inevitably leads to frustration which usually leads to anger. So they stuff that, too. Eventually, though, those feelings are going to come out, and probably not in a very healthy way.

How much better it would be if the offended spouse felt the freedom to say: "We need to talk. I'm sure you didn't mean to hurt my feelings, but you did. Here's how I feel..."

Whether in a marriage, friendship, or work relationship, if people could feel the freedom to express their feelings in a healthy, kind, tender, honest way, then relationships would be stronger, and grudges would be gone.

Perhaps a brief word of caution is needed here. This doesn't mean that you can *always* tell *everyone* how you feel on *every* issue. You have to use discernment, good judgment, and common sense. The Bible says, "*A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back*" (Proverbs 29:11). Sometimes we do need to hold our feelings back. At other times, though, especially in those very intimate relationships, we have to learn how to express our feelings in the most healthy, appropriate, and productive ways so that our feelings of anger don't grow and eventually explode. By expressing our anger appropriately in those super-close, ultra-intimate relationships, we are actually strengthening the relationships (hopefully!) and becoming closer to one another in the process.

6. Some anger needs to be confessed.

While some anger needs to be *expressed*, much of our anger needs to be *confessed*. Most anger is condemned in the Bible. Yes, as we have seen, some anger should definitely be expressed, but that is the exception, not the rule. Billy Graham used to say that in his estimation "righteous indignation is 10% *righteous* and 90% *indignation*." I think he was right.

In the overwhelming majority of biblical cases, anger is condemned, and we are instructed

to confess it and repent of it. That is certainly the case in this verse: *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice”* (Ephesians 4:31). Notice that anger (along with these other negative emotions and behaviors) is to *“be put away from you.”* This type of seething, raging, boiling anger is clearly condemned in Scripture as sin. And sin, as we know, must not be tolerated in our lives.

Notice the six-step escalation process of negative, toxic emotions and behaviors in the above-mentioned verse:

■ Bitterness—The root meaning of bitterness is “to cut, to prick.”¹³ Sometimes people do or say things that hurt us. Their words or actions “cut us” or “prick us” deep in our hearts. If we don’t forgive them immediately, a bitter root will form in our hearts.

■ Wrath—This includes feelings of indignation where we think to ourselves: “How dare they say that to me or do that to me.” At this point, the bitter root is beginning to grow, but it’s only perceptible to the person who has it. Others can’t see it yet, but the person who has it is “hot” on the inside.¹⁴

■ Anger—When wrath turns into anger, others begin to notice it. The angry

person has a tenseness, uptightness, and unpleasantness about him. The person's "disposition" begins to change.¹⁵ His veins are bulging, his muscles are tensing, and his expression isn't happy.

■ Clamor—The word "clamor" literally means "loud quarreling."¹⁶ This is when voices are raised.

■ Evil Speaking—At this point, the offended and angry person begins to say things like: "I hate you." "I wish I'd never met you." "I wish you had never been born." "You're the dumbest person I know." Comments like these are devastating. It takes the grace of God, a certain amount of time, and help from others to overcome them.

■ Malice—At this point, the offended and angry person wants to hurt their offender... maybe physically or maybe with their words. The idea is one of "maliciousness" and "viciousness." The angry person literally becomes a "vicious character."¹⁷

The Bible tells us that each negative emotion and behavior mentioned here must be confessed as sin and immediately turned away from. These qualities do not fit the life of a believer. We have the Holy Spirit living in us, and these attitudes and behaviors "grieve" Him.

It's interesting to me that the verse *before* the verse where this six-step escalation process is explained contains these words: "*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God*" (Ephesians 4:30). To "*grieve the Holy Spirit*" is to make Him "sorrowful."¹⁸ Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice all "*grieve*" the Holy Spirit. These things break His heart. So, we must confess them and refuse to tolerate them in our lives. They don't belong in the life of a child of God. We are new creations, and while those attitudes and behaviors may have described our lives *before we met Christ*, they certainly shouldn't describe our lives *now*.

The verse *after* the verse chronicling the six-step escalation process of negative emotions and behaviors says this: "*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*" (Ephesians 4:32). Kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness are to characterize our lives as Christians. Again, no one is perfect. Sometimes we *do* hold a grudge. Sometimes we *do* get angry. Sometimes we *do* say things we shouldn't have said. But those should be the rare exceptions, not the overall pattern of our lives. When we sin, we should come clean, apologize, and move forward with kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness leading the way.

The Holy Spirit can change us from the inside out so that none of our “old ways” control us anymore. We are to be controlled by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. He is our Master. Our old, negative emotions no longer have to rule over us. Those things have been confessed and put away from us.

7. Sudden anger, prolonged anger, and unhealthy anger are signs that you’re not right with God.

When the warning lights on your car’s dashboard come on, they are telling you that something isn’t right. The engine needs to be serviced, the brakes need to be checked, or the oil needs to be changed. As the driver, you probably aren’t able to recognize any of that, but the warning signs make you aware of an unseen problem. Similarly, sometimes we aren’t right with God, but we just keep on driving down the road of life thinking everything is fine. But God has His own warning signs...and one of them is our anger. When we frequently experience sudden anger, when we live with prolonged anger, and when we refuse to deal with unhealthy anger, those are heaven’s warning signs alerting us to the fact that something’s wrong spiritually. Something’s wrong on the inside. Anger, as we will see, is often the result of a much deeper problem.

The first mention of anger in the Bible is found in Genesis 4. Adam and Eve had become the parents of two sons, Cain and Abel. One day, those boys offered up a sacrifice to God. God rejected Cain's offering, but He accepted Abel's offering. As a result, Cain became angry. Here's how the Bible tells the story:

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the LORD.’ Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’

Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field,

that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him” (Genesis 4:1-8).

Cain was angry. God confronted him about it and told him not to act on it. Things would only get worse if he did. Cain refused to deal with his anger. He didn’t confess it and get rid of it. He acted on it instead and killed his brother. How tragically sad.

Here’s the question, though: *Why was Cain angry in the first place?* You might say, “He was angry because God didn’t accept his offering.” While there’s truth in that answer, that’s not the whole truth. Why didn’t God accept Cain’s offering? The reason God rejected Cain’s offering is because Cain had offered up the fruit he had grown. He was offering up to God the work of his own hands. Abel, on the other hand, offered up to God a sacrificed animal. And in so doing, he offered up to God the blood of that animal.

Cain’s offering represents the way religious people try to make themselves acceptable to God. Abel’s offering represents the sacrifice Jesus would make for us on the cross. Evidently, God had revealed to these two brothers how to approach Him, and Abel obeyed while Cain rebelled.¹⁹

Cain's heart wasn't right with God. As a result, he had no peace. If a person isn't at peace with God, he can't really be at peace with himself. And if a person isn't at peace with himself, he can't really be at peace with others. Cain was angry with Abel because Cain had no peace in his heart. And he had no peace because he wasn't right with God. And he wasn't right with God because he was depending on his offering of fruit to make himself acceptable to God instead of offering up a blood sacrifice. His faith was in the wrong thing, and as a result, he had no peace, and he was very angry.

The same is true today. If you frequently express sudden anger, if you live with periods of prolonged and extended anger, and if you refuse to deal with unhealthy anger, I can assure you that you're not right with God. That doesn't necessarily mean you're not saved, but it does mean that something isn't right in your relationship with the Lord. Some sin, some attitude, some negligence, some misplaced priority, or even misplaced faith has come between you and Jesus. As a result, you have no peace, and since you have no peace, your heart is full of turmoil, frustration, and anger instead of peace, forgiveness, and love.

There is a chance, though, that the reason you are so controlled by anger is because you never

have truly been saved. The warning signs of anger...that just keep flashing on the dashboard of your life...are God's way of getting your attention.

If you would like to know for certain that you are truly saved, pray this prayer right now and transfer your faith from your good works to the blood of Jesus:

Dear Jesus,

I'm convinced that I'm not right with You. Instead of trusting in Your blood, I've been trusting in my own good intentions and good deeds to save me. My misplaced faith has left me restless, empty, lonely, and angry.

I believe that You died on the cross to pay for my sins. And I believe that You rose from the dead three days later thus conquering sin, hell, and the grave.

I ask You now to come into my heart, forgive my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart, Lord. Begin now to make me the person You created me to be.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.*

Friend, if you just prayed that prayer, congratulations! God just answered it. You just became a Christian. Share your decision with a friend and then make it public in a good Bible-believing church as soon as possible.

8. When you feel the impulse of anger begin to rise up within you, view it as an opportunity to stay quiet, calm, and kind. And view it as an opportunity to respond like Jesus would.

Just because you've been made right with God by placing your faith in the blood of Jesus, that doesn't mean you'll never struggle with anger again. Christians are still human, and we still have the old sin nature to deal with. The difference between us *now* and *before we got saved* is that now we have peace with God and now we have the Holy Spirit living within us to help us.

In the midst of the irritations and injustices we face, we need a plan of action that can help us in the actual moment when the impulse of anger begins to boil up on the inside of us. We need *a thought* or *a word* or *some other plan* to keep us from acting on the dangerous impulse of anger. Some people walk away. Some people count to ten. Some people close their eyes. While those are great things to do, I want to give

you a word that just might keep you from getting into trouble the next time you get angry. The word is “PAUSE.” Before responding to that unkind email, answering that ugly letter, or challenging that cutting or untrue comment, I encourage you to “PAUSE” and think for a moment. Buy yourself some time. Maybe this acrostic will help:

Pray—Ask God to help you.

Analyze—Analyze the situation and begin to think about the wisest way to respond.

Unwind—Remember, anger tenses us up. So, take a moment to relax, unwind, and breathe deeply before responding.

Stop—Remember, you have the ability (with God’s help) to control your emotions. Make a decision to stop yourself from doing or saying anything that you will later regret.

Express—Express patience, kindness, forgiveness, love, and graciousness instead of impatience, unkindness, anger, harshness, and rudeness. You will never regret expressing those positive responses instead of the negative ones.

I’ve never regretted pausing before speaking or acting. I’ve often regretted not pausing. Take

a moment to memorize that acrostic and remember to put it into practice the next time you get angry about something. I guarantee you that it will help. It will help you to buy some time, and it will help you to refocus your attention onto God and off of the person or situation that got under your skin. Take a moment right now to “PAUSE.” **Pray. Analyze. Unwind. Stop. Express. Memorize** that and apply it when the impulse of anger hits you.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of our time together, I want to share an interesting Bible verse with you. I read it recently, and it really got my attention. Jesus spoke these words: “*Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder*” (Luke 20:18).

The “stone” Jesus was referring to was Himself. The Bible makes it clear that He is “*the chief cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20). When a person refuses to come to Christ and get saved, one day that person will meet Christ as Judge. And, on that day, the judgment of God “*will grind him to powder.*”

Think of how the judgment of God came upon Jesus when He died on the cross bearing the sins of the entire world. If a person rejects Christ, though, their sins are still on them. As a result, they will be judged one day. If the judgment of God on Jesus was as brutal as it was, just imagine what His judgment on the unsaved will be.

If, on the other hand, we come to Jesus and make Him “*the chief cornerstone*” of our lives, we “*will be broken.*” But what does that mean? Well, after we get saved, God begins the process of making us progressively more like Jesus. He begins to “break away from us” everything that doesn’t resemble His sinless Son. And one of those things is unhealthy anger.

The “breaking process” can be very painful, but I can assure you that it’s always worth it. I don’t want anything in my life that doesn’t belong there. I want to be “broken” from that. In my case, I recognize that God still has a lot of “breaking” yet to do. May He be gentle in the process. May I be fully cooperative. And may I become...each and every day...a little more like Jesus. That’s my prayer for you as well.

As I have said, no one is perfect. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus, though, our anger will lessen, and our love will grow. And, in the

process, our spirits will become lighter, and our lives will become easier. If “anger” brings “danger” (and it does), then *ridding ourselves of unhealthy anger* and *properly channeling healthy anger* must certainly be the way to a safer, happier, and better life.

A wise minister once told me that we are all like a tube of toothpaste and that when we “get squeezed” whatever is on the inside comes out. Life has a way of “squeezing” us. So do other people. If *unhealthy anger* comes out of us, it was there all along. May we be so full of Jesus that when we “get squeezed” His love comes out of us. And even during those times when we need to express *healthy* and *productive anger*, may we do so with love, tact, and grace.

¹ Gayle Rosellini and Mark Worden, “Anger Quiz,” *Anger Management*, <https://www.gracepointwellness.org/116-anger-management/article/3396-anger-quiz> (accessed March 9, 2022).

² “Anger,” *Webster’s 21st Century Dictionary of the English Language*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1993, p. 11.

³ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

-
- ⁵ Brett and Kate McKay, “Got Thumos?” September 26, 2021, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/behavior/got-thumos/> (accessed June 9, 2022).
- ⁶ W. E. Vine, p. 26.
- ⁷ Terrence Metz, “Dealing With Anger – Only One Letter Short of Danger,” <https://mgrush.com/blog/dealing-with-anger/> (accessed March, 11, 2022).
- ⁸ I adapted this illustration from an illustration I heard Adrian Rogers give in a sermon on anger. I fleshed it out a little differently than he did, but I nonetheless give him credit for the illustration.
- ⁹ Carmine Gallo, “150 Years Before Twitter, Abe Lincoln Discovered How to Avoid Getting Angry on Social Media,” November 26, 2018, <https://www.inc.com/carmine-gallo/its-easy-to-fire-off-an-angry-tweet-or-email-take-abraham-lincolns-brilliant-advice-instead.html> (accessed March 11, 2022).
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ H.A. Ironside, *Addresses on the Gospel of John*, Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Neptune, NJ, 1984, p. 85.
- ¹² William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1995, p. 1475.
- ¹³ W. E. Vine, p. 68.
- ¹⁴ W. E. Vine, p. 688.
- ¹⁵ W. E. Vine, p. 26.
- ¹⁶ *The Holy Bible—New King James Version*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, 1996, p. 1030.
- ¹⁷ W. E. Vine, p. 388.
- ¹⁸ W. E. Vine, p. 281.
- ¹⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2005, p. 19.

Booklets by Jon Redmond

- *How to be a Happy Christian*
- *Riding Out the Storms of Life*
- *Finding Freedom Through Forgiveness*
- *Never Alone*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home (Spanish)*
- *When God Says, "Wait"*
- *How to Have a Peaceful Heart*
- *In the Twinkling of an Eye*
- *Angels Among Us*
- *What Happens at the Moment of Death?*
- *Discovering God's Will*
- *The Lord Is My Shepherd*
- *How to Lead a Child to Christ*
- *On Eagles' Wings*
- *Living on the Edge of Eternity*
- *The Problem With Procrastination*
- *The Lord's Prayer*
- *Lessons from the Lions' Den*
- *How to Survive a Satanic Attack*
- *Lessons I Learned From My Mother*
- *When My Heart is Overwhelmed*
- *Don't Take the Bitter Pill*

-
- *The Judgment Seat of Christ*
 - *When Life Gets Interrupted*
 - *When the Heart Breaks*
 - *How to Handle a Crisis*
 - *The Danger of Anger*
 - *Understanding the Bible (Its Message, Manuscripts, Composition, and Greatest Translations)*
 - *Hiding His Word in Our Hearts (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *31 Timeless Truths for Victorious Christian Living (A Fresh Thought for Each Day of the Month)*
 - *Meeting God in the Psalms (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *Pondering the Proverbs (A 31 Day Devotional of Bible Verses)*
 - *Prayer & Fasting (3 Days of Seeking the Lord)*
 - *The Life of Christ (As Depicted in the Chapel Windows of First Baptist Church in Pasadena)*
 - *Bible Reading Plan (5 Different Plans are Available)*

Most of these booklets can be read online at www.fbp.org. All of the booklets are available at First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas.

Jon Redmond

Jon Redmond is the associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pasadena, Texas. He has served on the church staff at First Baptist since 1995.

A graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (D.Min.), Jon's desire is to lead people to trust Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord and to help them grow in their relationship with Him.