



# What About Anger?

## ***Is Anger Sin?***

The Bible says the Christian must “put off” or get rid of “anger and rage” (*Colossians 3:8*). But didn’t Jesus get angry? Is anger sin? “Anger” may be defined as a “strong emotion of displeasure aroused by a real or supposed wrong.” Anger is not necessarily a sin. It is a God-given emotion.

## ***Justifiable Anger***

The Bible often speaks of the anger or wrath of God. Jesus got angry. In Mark 3, when the Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath, the Scripture says Jesus “looked around at them in anger” and was “deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts” (*Mark 3:5*). Jesus’ actions in clearing the temple indicate anger (*John 2:14-16*). Yet Jesus was “without sin” (*Hebrews 4:15*). His anger was a “righteous” or “justifiable” anger, because his motives were righteous and his emotions were kept under perfect control. We too can experience a justifiable anger. Thus the Bible says, “be angry, and yet do not sin” (*Ephesians 4:26, NASB*).



## ***Sinful Anger***

Typically, our anger is not justifiable, or at least not entirely. Our anger is usually influenced by selfishness and pride (e.g. a wounded pride, a selfish or critical spirit, or a clinging to personal rights). Even if our anger is initially justifiable, it can easily lead us to sin. Thus the Bible tells us to be slow to anger, “for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (*James 1:20*). The anger that belongs to our “earthly nature” must be “put to death” (*Col 3:5*).

## ***Handling Anger***

How do we handle anger? Most of the following suggestions are adapted from the book *Emotions – Can You Trust Them?* (Dr. James Dobson, 1980, Regal Books):

- ❑ Think before you react. It may help to silently count to 10 or 20 (or more) before responding to an irritation. “Be slow to anger” (*James 1:20*).
- ❑ Make the irritation a matter of prayer. Ask God for wisdom in answering these questions: Why am I angry? What are my motivations? Are they selfish or prideful? How should I respond? Ask God for the strength to respond appropriately.
- ❑ Explain your negative feelings to a mature and understanding third party who can advise and lead.
- ❑ Go to the offender and show a spirit of love and forgiveness.
- ❑ Understand that God often permits the most frustrating and agitating events to occur so as to teach us patience and help us grow.
- ❑ Realize that no offense by another person could possibly equal our offense before God, yet He has shown great mercy in offering salvation through the sacrifice of His Son. Are we not obligated to show the same mercy to others?

Sometimes we realize that our anger is wrong, but we make excuses. The Bible says, “put it off.” Other times, we assume *our* anger is justifiable, while others’ anger is only bad temper. We need to examine our hearts and uncover our hidden motives. Even when our anger is truly justifiable, we need to proceed cautiously. Our response to justifiable anger needs to be turned into positive action under the control of God’s Spirit. We need to act, not react. Read and remember the following Scripture passages concerning anger.

### ***Scripture Concerning Anger***

- ❑ A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. (*Proverbs 29:11*)
- ❑ A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated. (*Proverbs 14:17*)
- ❑ A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. (*Proverbs 14:29*)
- ❑ Refrain from anger and turn away from wrath; do not fret – it leads only to evil. (*Psalms 37:8*)
- ❑ A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (*Proverbs 15:1*)
- ❑ Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city. (*Proverbs 16:32*)
- ❑ A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel. (*Proverbs 15:18*)
- ❑ An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins. (*Proverbs 29:22*)
- ❑ Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools. (*Ecclesiastes 7:9*)
- ❑ Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (*James 1:19-20*)
- ❑ In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. (*Ephesians 4:26*)
- ❑ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. (*Ephesians 4:31*)
- ❑ A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. (*Proverbs 19:11*)

*Above Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*