

MANAGING
ANGER
GOD'S WAY



WARREN HENDERSON



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

Managing Anger God's Way

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Anger is a God-given emotion, not a behavior. It is neither good nor bad, though it excites good or bad behavior depending on our inner spiritual condition.

In this study course, we will learn from Scripture about God's holy anger. Then we'll begin the difficult task of aligning our selfish anger and unrighteous behavior with God's righteousness. This task requires each of us to honestly evaluate our anger tendencies, to remove internal conditions that induce angry feelings, and to learn techniques to manage our anger in a God-honoring way. If you mismanage anger, this course will guide you into better self-control.

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has ten chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on the Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.


 BE ANGRY AND DO NOT SIN

INITIAL INSIGHTS ABOUT ANGER

“For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

The Relationship Between Anger and Peace

Have you noticed the way in which the apostle Paul commences each of his epistles? *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 1:2). Sometimes his salutations include *mercy* between *grace* and *peace*, but in each of his letters, *grace* always precedes *peace*. A work of grace needs to be accomplished in our hearts before peace will reside there. God must do a work upon us and within us if we ever want to know His peace. *“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:7).

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For this reason, it is necessary for us to understand and evaluate our anger with scriptural illumination and spiritual discernment. If we have righteous anger, it must be yielded up to God for His use and glory. In some cases, where we are suffering unjustly, this process will require us to release our anger. In doing so, we will offer a sweet-smelling sacrifice for suffering wrongly. Man cannot cheat time, and eventually the Lord will judge these matters to our satisfaction. If we have unrighteous (selfish) anger, it must be extinguished. No room for resentment and rage will be found in a believer’s heart if Christ is there!

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

The Lord is “*gentle and lowly in heart.*” Adams Clarke comments with regard to Matthew 11:29: “Wherever pride and anger dwell, there is nothing but mental labor and agony; but, where the meekness and humility of Christ dwell, all is smooth, even, peaceable, and quiet; for the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.”¹

Anger Is God-Given

Commenting on how man characteristically mishandles anger, Aristotle said this: “Anybody can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose and in the right way—that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.”² Anger is one of the most powerful and assertive emotions God conferred on mankind the day He breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life. Anger would enable man to serve God and his fellowman during alarming circumstances when other emotions would be simply inadequate.

Anger Is an Emotion

Anger is an emotion, not a behavior. It is neither good nor bad, though it excites good or bad behavior depending upon the spiritual condition of our inner man. For many, anger has become an expensive luxury for selfish abuse. In recent years, the number of individuals in anger counseling has escalated—one of the results of a self-seeking culture. A society characterized by child abuse, immorality, broken homes, disrespect to authority, and poor child training is destined to experience an anger epidemic.

Recently, the Associated Press reported on a case of “restaurant rage,” where a man, apparently angry that his \$6 steak and cheese sandwich was too cold, was arrested on a charge of threatening to blow up the restaurant and kill its manager.³ From road rage to terrorism, acts of rage dominate our news reports. Anger and death will rule a society that has drifted apart from God, for life and peace are only obtained through Jesus Christ (John 1:4, 16:33).

The Scriptures Help Us Understand Anger

Without God’s Word, the Holy Scriptures, mankind would not know what anger is and how it is to be used. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Christian would have no hope of yielding his or her anger to bring about righteousness for God’s glory. “*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath*” (Eph. 4:26) Commenting on the first portion of this verse, Charles Spurgeon wrote, “There can hardly be goodness in a man if he be not angry at sin; he who loves truth must hate every false way.”²⁴ Righteous anger purposes good and bestows blessing, while unrighteous anger vents wrath and harbors resentment. For the sun to go down upon



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a settled and peaceful heart, the smoldering embers of resentment and fierce flames of rage must be extinguished.

Anger liberation, emotional healing, and spiritual regeneration are only possible through knowing divine truth and yielding to it. “*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*” (John 8:32, 36). There are many humanistic

forms of anger self-helps available today, but as Raymond J. Larson puts it, “Psychotherapy will put a band-aid on the gash; but for healing, men’s lives must be changed from within.”²⁵ In the following pages, the reader will first learn of God’s desire for anger as seen in His own righteous character and revealed precepts, then of tools for bringing wrong anger attitudes in line with His purposes. For our souls to enjoy serenity, we must cleanse our anger, heal emotional scars, abandon selfish bents, and experience forgiveness—both God’s and our own. Anger is not an evil emotion; and circumstances do exist that require anger-motivated behavior to accomplish good. When we choose to uphold the righteousness of God when angry, God is honored.

The Scriptures Teach Us About God’s Anger

God demonstrates this reality in His own character and behavior. The Old Testament contains over 200 direct and approximately another 150 implied references to divine anger. God’s anger is associated with the unrighteous conduct of those of His creatures that possess a free moral

will, namely, angels and humans. “*God is angry with the wicked every day*” (Ps. 7:11). God is holy in nature and, therefore, cannot sin (Ps. 30:4, 111:9). “*For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness*” (Ps. 11:7). His very essence defines what is righteous; whatever is apart from God is unholy (Isa. 45:5-7). The fact that Scripture frequently reveals God’s anger as a righteous emotion in response to unholy conduct affirms that anger itself is not a sin. Likewise, from time to time, all of us will be confronted with circumstances which prompt our anger. The challenge is to ensure that our anger will honor God and not needlessly hurt others or serve ourselves.

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The Goal: Managing My Anger

Paul exhorted the believers at Ephesus, “*Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil*” (Eph. 4:26-27). Herein lies the problem. Anger enables me to do the spectacular, but because it is such a powerful emotion, I can have difficulty managing it well for very long. Congealed anger will eventually prompt me to sin against God and to hurt others. I must extinguish anger immediately after it has served God or it will ultimately serve the flesh (sinful nature).

In the following pages we will tackle such questions as

- “Why am I angry?”
- “Should I be angry?”
- “How do I control my angry feelings?”
- “How can my anger benefit others and serve God?”

From Scripture we will learn of God’s holy anger, then we’ll begin the difficult task of aligning our selfish anger and unrighteous behavior with His righteousness. This task will require each of us to honestly evaluate our anger tendencies, to remove internal conditions that frequently induce angry feelings, and to learn techniques to manage our anger in a God-honoring way. If you mismanage anger, this course will guide you into better self-control.

Anger Manifests Itself Against Sin

It may be observed that Scripture does not mention anger before the fall of man or the rebellion of Lucifer. God is unchanging in every aspect of His essence and character (Mal. 3:6); He therefore had the capacity to be angry before He created anything, even though no one existed with whom He could be angry. Adam was fashioned in the “likeness” of God (Gen. 1:26). He therefore had the capacity to experience anger immediately after God breathed life into him. While man was in Eden, however, anger was dormant, unneeded, and unwelcome.

Man had also been created in God’s image to visibly represent God’s authority over His creation; thus, he was God’s crown to creation (Heb. 2:7-8). As long as upright and innocent man maintained a pure testimony of God’s authority in creation, a state of happiness existed in Eden, for there was nothing present to provoke anger. We may conclude, therefore, that all anger manifests itself righteously or unrighteously as a result of wrongdoing—sin. Sin provokes anger; and if anger is not managed, it incites more sin. It is a vicious cycle that ensures much suffering and pain.

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Before investigating the peculiarities and flaws of our own anger, we need to research God’s intent for anger and its proper usage. This objective is best accomplished by examining what God has revealed in Scripture regarding His own anger. The Lord’s anger is always perfect and in agreement with His divine character. God is not motivated to action by one particular emotion in such a way that any part of His perfect character is compromised. Love, grace, mercy, justice, righteousness, long-suffering, purity, and so on, are always satisfied in every divine action. This is why Paul speaks of the “*fruit* of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23 and not the “*fruits* of the Spirit.” All God’s character is unified in reflecting His holiness.

Anger in Relation to Holiness

Perhaps the reader heard the parental instruction during childhood, “Do what I say and not what I do.” Our heavenly Father can truly charge us to “do what I do and do what I say,” for there is no inconsistency between the two. God longs for His children to be like Himself and His Son in thought and deed (Rom. 8:29). “*Be holy, for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16).

How is it possible to morally behave as God does? *“But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Cor. 3:18). We can keep our faces unveiled before God by confessing and forsaking sin. Understanding of righteousness is gained from reading the Word of God (James 1:23-25), so that we can “see ourselves” in contrast to God’s holiness. By yielding to divine truth, the believer is transformed into deeper shades of Christlikeness (the same image, from glory to glory).

When we occupy ourselves with the splendor and glory of Christ and submit to the control of the Holy Spirit, holy living will be truly ushered into our lives. H. A. Ironside explains this understanding in his book *Holiness—The False and the True*:

“I have been learning all along my pilgrim journey that the more my heart is taken up with Christ, the more do I enjoy practical deliverance from sin’s power, and the more do I realize what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in that heart by the Holy Spirit given to me, as the earnest of the glory to come.”⁶

So let us learn the characteristics of God’s anger and pray for grace to conform the working of our anger to His. Living a Christ-centered and disciplined life will reduce the number of occasions on which we inappropriately and unnecessarily feel angry. When we are in close fellowship with the Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit will effectively control and mold our anger to accomplish the righteousness of God.

God Is Slow to Anger

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever” (Ps. 103:8-9).

“The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger and great in mercy” (Ps. 145:8).

God is slow to anger, so we should be as well. The fact that God’s anger is not quickly kindled does not mean He is negligent to act. His slowness to anger ensures a deliberate response at the appropriate time. By His own character, God demonstrates that anger is to be a secondary, not a primary, emotion. If anger were a primary emotion, it would rule our

lives with a heavy hand. Anger is not to be a quick-triggered emotion that abruptly enters and exits our daily routine. God desires for us to have a long-suffering attitude, which allows anger to deliver a measured response at the best time.

“A quick-tempered man acts foolishly: and a man of wicked intentions is hated” (Prov. 14:17).

“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God; not self-willed, not quick-tempered . . .” (Titus 1:7).

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32).

God Is Provoked to Anger

“When you beget children, and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make an image of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger . . .” (Deut. 4:25)

“And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger” (Deut. 9:18).

The Lord is not a furious God, but He is “provoked” to anger. Either an appalling event or a series of distressing circumstances should occur before anger heightens the body into action. The Lord Jesus said, “*Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*” (Matt. 5:22). One of the first questions we should ask ourselves when first feeling angry is, “Do I have a righteous cause to be angry?” If the situation does not demand anger-induced behavior, we have been wrongly provoked to anger.

“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said, ‘Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well . . .’” (Ex. 4:14).

“Now when the people [Israel] 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” (Num. 11:1).

The Hebrew word translated “kindled” or “aroused” in the above verses is *charah* (khaw-raw’), which means “to grow warm.” It is normally applied in a figurative sense, “to blaze up.” The word describes the igniting of combustible materials and the nursing of the initial spark into the desired fire. Not only is God slow to be angry, but once provoked to anger, His anger fully develops before He acts. His anger requires sufficient kindling before flaming vengeance is invoked. *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire”* (Heb. 12:28-29). Righteous provocation and a period of anger development are necessary before going into action.

God's Anger Does Not Endure

“Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. For His anger is but a moment, His favor is for life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:4-5).

“He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever” (Ps. 103:9).

Anger must have an immediate God-honoring purpose, or it is to be dismissed. This is a fundamental rule of anger management: my anger must have a present righteous purpose or it must be dismissed until such a time as it can immediately and righteously serve God. Once righteous anger has served God, it must be let go. Anger is too strong of an emotion to contain or control for a long period of time; eventually, we will serve the flesh—and in so doing, we will sin against God.

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“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm” (Ps. 37:7-8).

“Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools” (Eccl. 7:9).

God's Anger Prompts His Secondary Work

“For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual act” (Isa. 28:21).

Isaiah calls our attention to the fact that God's anger, which leads to wrath and judgment, is not part of His primary work. God's anger, leading to judgment and then to destruction, is a necessary aspect of God's sovereignty, but His usual and normal work arises from His gracious, loving nature. It is not that righteous wrath is less noble than divine love, for each necessitates the other. J. Oswald Sanders explains:

“It was Jesus' love for the man with the withered hand that aroused His anger against those who would deny him healing. It was His love for His Father, and zeal for His glory, that kindled His anger against the mercenary traders who had turned His house of prayer for all nations into a cave of robbers (Matt. 21:13, John 2:15-17).”⁷

Although Scripture frequently speaks of God's wrath and anger, His actions of mercy, love, and grace are His normal, usual work. God is a God of love (1 John 4:8), but He could not justly save mankind by love alone; His justice demanded judgment for sin.

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:8-9).

Thus, God's love found a way to righteously offer salvation through judging His Son for human sin. God can legally offer the gift of eternal salvation to “*whoever*” believes the message. Those who reject His gracious offer will spend an eternity in hell, “*for the wages of sin is death*” (Rom. 6:23). “The eternity of punishment is a thought which crushes the heart,” said Charles Spurgeon. “The Lord God is slow to anger, but when He is once aroused to it, as He will be against those who finally reject His Son, He will put forth all His omnipotence to crush His enemies.”⁸

Summary Points

Author and teacher Warren Wiersbe concisely contrasts God's righteous anger with our natural propensity to sin when angry:

“In the Garden, Peter was slow to hear, swift to speak, and swift to anger—and he almost killed a man with the sword. Many church fights are the result of short tempers and hasty words. There is a godly anger against sin (Eph. 4:26); and if we love the Lord, we must hate sin (Ps. 97:10). But man's anger does not produce God's righteousness (James 1:20). In fact, anger is just the opposite of the patience God wants to produce in our lives as we mature in Christ (James 1:3-4).”⁹

From this scriptural evaluation of God's anger and His exhortations concerning our anger, the following practices should characterize our anger management:

1. I must be *slow* to anger.
2. I must be *righteously provoked* to anger.
3. My anger should *develop* before righteous action is taken.
4. My anger must have a *present righteous purpose* to prompt action.
5. If my anger cannot immediately serve righteousness, it must be *released*.
6. My anger is to be *quickly relinquished* after serving a just purpose.

MANAGING ANGER GOD'S WAY



EXAM BOOKLET AK '11 (2 UNITS) MAGW

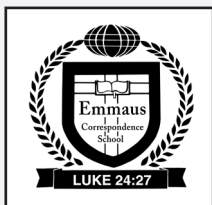
STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

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COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THESE EXAM PAGES

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NOW I HAVE A QUESTION . . .

As you complete the exams, you may have additional questions about the course material that have not been answered. In the below area, you may ask any question you have related to the chapters you have studied. Your instructor will respond to your questions as best as he or she can.

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

INITIAL INSIGHTS ABOUT ANGER

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. In order to experience peace in our souls, unrighteous anger must be
 - A. expressed
 - B. extinguished
 - C. internalized
 - D. denied

2. Anger is an emotion
 - A. given by God
 - B. acquired by Adam's fall
 - C. originating in our sinful nature
 - D. implanted by Satan's design

3. The emotion of anger excites good or bad behavior depending on
 - A. the extent of the provocation to anger
 - B. the circumstances of our lives
 - C. the people surrounding us at the moment
 - D. the spiritual condition of our inner man

4. Anger is
 - A. always sinful
 - B. sometimes righteous
 - C. never appropriate
 - D. never justified

5. We can align our anger with God's anger by
 - A. focusing on His holiness and submitting to His Word
 - B. trying to control our anger by our will
 - C. reading books about anger
 - D. watching how others deal with anger

- 6. Because God is slow to anger
 - A. He overlooks sin in His people
 - B. He is not currently concerned about evil in the world
 - C. He acts deliberately at the appropriate time
 - D. He demonstrates a “hands off” policy in human affairs

- 7. One of the sins referenced in the chapter that Israel committed, provoking God’s anger, was
 - A. indifference C. complaining
 - B. bickering D. adultery

- 8. A fundamental rule of anger management states that righteous anger
 - A. must be retained for a long period of time
 - B. should be expressed only to God, not people
 - C. should be repeatedly expressed to many people
 - D. must be let go once it has served God

- 9. God’s anger, which leads to wrath and judgment, is His
 - A. primary work C. secondary work
 - B. continual work D. impulsive work

- 10. God’s justice demands _____ of sinful behavior
 - A. tolerance C. understanding
 - B. judgment D. ignoring

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

How do you respond to the concept that anger is not always bad?
