



# Overcoming Anger Through Bible Teachings

Scores of Biblical verses document God's wrath, and yet scripture also counsels us to love our enemies. Learn about the Biblical message regarding anger and how you can apply it.

By Gail Sears

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Gail Sears - August 02, 2013

*When a driver pulls out in front of you with no warning, do you:*

- a) Honk and give him a dirty look*
- b) Curse repeatedly while tailing him for the next two miles*
- c) Rear end him*
- d) Make an excuse for him, such as "He must not have seen me."*

Your answer to this scenario may give you a glimpse on how you handle anger. One of the greatest resources for understanding and managing anger is the Bible. It tells us that God himself experiences emotions of all kinds: pleasure in his creations, sadness at the loss of his friend Lazarus, and yes, many Bible verses illustrate God's anger being kindled against the unrighteous, the irreverent and the unfaithful. He is described as experiencing provocation and wrath and in his anger punishing individuals and destroying entire cities. And yet, he is the same God that pleads with us to turn the other cheek. So, what exactly is the Biblical message about anger and how can we apply it?

## **Anger defined**

The New Testament usually uses one of two Greek translations of the word anger. One meaning "passion or natural impulse" and the other meaning "inflamed or boiling." One leads us to defend a principle, another person or even ourselves appropriately and the other leads us to cause harm by acting in outrage. Christian author S. Michael Houdmann defines the kind of anger that may be labeled appropriate or just as "God-given energy intended to help us solve problems."

## **God's anger**

When applied to God, this just anger is often called righteous indignation and is described in Psalm 7:11: "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." An example of this anger occurs when the Pharisees try to accuse Jesus of doing work on the Sabbath after he heals a man's hand, and Christ "looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." When God's children break his laws it is only natural that he experience disappointment, frustration and even ire. His indignation (anger) is righteous (justified) because it is precipitated by his feelings about disobedience and unrighteousness upon which he cannot look with the least degree of allowance.

## **Anger and self-mastery**

Anger is an emotion that helps us to navigate our internal world and, as such, it cannot be stuffed or denied. Yet it can be managed. The Biblical mandate is to temper, bridle, control, and

harness our passions: "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things" (1 Corinthians. 9:25). "School thy feelings, O my brother."

## Setting aside anger

The holy record teaches us to regulate and restrain our anger. Think of it as getting a hot pie out of the oven. The pie has been in a heated environment and is going to reflect that temperature. But it is not safe to eat until we have set it aside to cool a little. Anger is a hot feeling; an emotion that we must take notice, respect and then choose to subdue as illustrated in the following three Bible verses.

- Psalms 37:8 "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Staying in a state of rage will only provoke us to do evil, so we are instructed to give up our anger and act in wisdom.
- Ephesians 4:26 "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Take the time to work out your angry feelings within the course of the day and not harbor resentments or rage.
- Ephesians 4:31 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger ... be put away from you." Anger is to be put away, or put aside so as not to cause us to do harm to others or ourselves.

## Slowing down anger

The Bible not only instructs us to manage the temperature of our anger but also its speed.

- "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Proverbs 14:29). As we take a step back from our feelings we will have more time to regulate our actions.
- "Charity ... is not easily provoked" (1 Cor. 13:5). Strive to lengthen your fuse and reaction time.

## God's example regarding anger

As our perfect exemplar, God shows us how to handle our anger. In many instances God changes from his wrathful intention of destroying a city such as Nineveh or a people such as the ancient Israelites to showing forgiveness and love. In his own words, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:8).

An excellent example of how to manage anger is set by Jesus when he sees animals and moneychangers polluting the temple of Jerusalem. Clearly disturbed, he takes the time to carefully braid a whip of cords before driving out all the animals and instructing the merchants to leave their wares. He experiences a natural feeling but controls his actions.

## **Unlearning anger**

Family advocate and public speaker Boyd K. Packer teaches, "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior." Studying the Bible will help you put off anger, wrath and malice as you put on Christ and become a new creature in him.

The next time your teenager talks to you with that tone, your boss misunderstands you, or a driver cuts you off, sing a hymn, recite a Bible verse, breathe and count to 10. Remember to slow your anger down, cool it off and follow Christ's example.

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