

Anger is a strong emotion of displeasure, agitation, and belligerence that is aroused when a person perceives a wrong suffered.

Anger is a God-given emotion that signals when something is wrong. Anger alerts you to hurts, injustices, fears, or frustrations over unmet expectations and needs. There are varying degrees of anger ranging from mild irritation to uncontrollable violence. Broad categories include: **indignation** (disgust for an offense or injustice), **wrath** (fierce anger with a desire to avenge which moves you toward action), **fury** (powerful anger that compels you towards violence or destruction), and **rage** (blazing anger that drives you to a loss of self-control, temporary insanity, or unmanageable violence).

While anger is not a sin, how you respond or express these feelings may become sinful. A proper response to anger will lead you to evaluate a circumstance, investigate yourself, understand God's will, and propel you to take steps toward spiritual health, but if this process breaks down your response to anger can lead to sin and destruction. Understanding why you are angry (Genesis 4:6-7) and how God wants you to respond to your anger (Ephesians 4:25-27) is critical for a healthy relationship with God and healthy relationships with others.

Unhealthy Responses to Anger (D-E-A-D):

- **D**eny: Denying anger enables sin (in others and yourself) and leads to shallow relationships. Honestly addressing feelings leads to self-awareness, truth, repentance, and healthy relationships. (Psalm 51:6)
- **E**rupt: Explosive, uncontrolled responses to feelings of anger fuel more destruction, pain, and regret—especially in cherished relationships. Only a fool gives full vent to rage. (Proverbs 29:11, 22)
- **A**brupt: Those quick to anger are slow to understand and stir up strife. (James 1:19, Proverbs 14:29)
- **D**rag out: Long-held anger leads to unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment instead of peace. (Ephesians 4:26, 31-32)

Anger Assessment

If you wonder if anger is a problem for you, honestly answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you feel irritated and frustrated often?
- 2) Do you often have a lot of battles going on in your mind?
- 3) Do you keep your feelings to yourself?
- 4) Do you avoid conflict and have issues with anxiety or depression?
- 5) Do you often feel like a victim of others' actions?
- 6) Are people constantly letting you down or do you constantly disappoint yourself?
- 7) Do you focus mostly on the faults of others or hold on to personal injustices?
- 8) Does your anger escalate until it is out of control?
- 9) Do your responses to conflict hurt the ones you love?
- 10) When hurt, are you quick to lash out or want to punish the one who harmed you?

Biblical Insights

Anger is not a sin, but a God-given emotion. Anger is a signal that something is wrong and needs to be addressed. We should be angry at sin and injustice because God is just.

- "God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day." (Psalm 7:11)
- "Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." (Ephesians 4:25-27)
- "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:19-20)
- "And [Jesus] looked around at [the Pharisees] with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored." (Mark 3:5)

Your response to feelings of anger can be sinful. Denying a wrong, becoming quick-tempered, raging, avenging the harms you've suffered, and holding onto resentments are all misuses of anger.

- *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."* (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- *"...everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment..."* (Matthew 5:22)

When feeling angry, pause to evaluate why you are angry, then ask God to help you respond biblically. Evaluate the circumstance, examine yourself, know God's will, and take steps toward spiritual health.

- *"...but for Cain and his offering [God] had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door.'" (Genesis 4:5-6)*
- *"Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."* (Proverbs 19:11)
 - **Has there been injustice?** Has there been a sin against you, another, or God? Are you convicted about your own sin? If so, begin to biblically address sin in you and in others (Matthew 18:15-17).
 - **Are you hurt?** Has someone hurt you or an old wound been opened? Is your pride wounded or do you feel shame? Be honest with yourself and God about your pain, recall God's forgiveness of you, and continue to take steps to forgive those who harmed you (Colossians 3:12-13).
 - **Are you afraid?** Has something stirred up an insecurity? Do you feel threatened? Do you have a relationship, desire, or goal that is in danger? Are you struggling to trust God? If so, confess your fear and lack of trust to God and begin to confront your idols (Psalm 56:3).
 - **Are you frustrated?** Do you have unmet expectations (from life, God, a loved one, or yourself)? Has someone or something failed you? Have you failed? Examine whether your expectations are realistic and address how you've sought significance or life apart from God (Psalm 42:11).

Remember that God is good, loving, just, and in control. He knows your pain, frustration, and fears. He will avenge all sin. He is in control and can bring good out of any circumstance. Release your rights to him. Confess and repent of ways you've misused anger. Turn to walk in his purpose for you.

- *The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."* (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

Next Steps

- If you answered yes to 3 or more questions in the Anger Assessment, be honest with yourself and begin to explore how you have denied or misused anger (Proverbs 28:13).
- Ask Christ to heal you (Psalm 147:3). Receive God's perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3). If you do not yet have a personal relationship with Christ, learn more at www.regenerationrecovery.org/freedom.
- Explore why you struggle with anger. Are past hurts affecting your relationships today? Repent of any anger that you have harbored and begin to reconcile relationships (Colossians 3:8-10).
- Find a bible-teaching church and begin to establish relationships with Christians who can help you identify and handle your anger according to God's word (Proverbs 20:18).
- Find a safe place that is Christ-centered, like a re:generation group, where you can address anger, examine past pain, realize your identity in Christ, and establish healthy relationships (1 John 1:7).

Additional Resources:

- Watch Riley's Step 7 Story at www.regenerationrecovery.org, or listen to Matthew's re:generation story at www.watermark.org/message/5230
- Watch Real Truth Real Quick, "What Does It Mean to Overlook a Minor Offense" and "Is It Okay for a Christian to Be Angry at God?"
- Books: *Good and Angry* – David Powlison; *Unoffendable* – Brant Hansen; *The Anger Workbook* – Les Carter, Frank Minirth; *Overcoming Emotions that Destroy* – Chip Ingram, Becca Johnson