

Wisdom 101: Proverbs

Lesson #7 – Temper, Temper

“When I hate someone, I become his or her slave. He or she controls my thoughts. My resentment produces stress hormones, and I become fatigued. Work becomes drudgery, and nothing gives me pleasure.” – S.I. McMillon, None of These Diseases

What are some “pet peeves” that can make you angry? How do you usually respond to those?

What are some negative ways we respond when we are angry?

What Does Anger Do?

Sometimes we might view our anger as harmless or neutral, but the Proverbs are clear that it can be destructive.

10:12 – “Hate starts quarrels, but love covers every wrong.” (God’s Word)

15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath. But a harsh word stirs up anger.”
(New American Standard)

27:4 – “Anger is cruel and destroys like a flood, but no one can put with jealousy!”
(New Century Version)

30:33 – “As churning butter produces butter and punching a nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces a fight.” (God’s Word)

Read Ephesians 4:26-27. What does Paul say about anger? What can it cause in the church?

According to this passage, what should our strategy be for dealing with anger?

Is it ever acceptable for a righteous person to be angry? Read John 2:13-21. Why was Jesus angry? What is the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger?

Who Should I Spend Time With?

As with many of the other attitudes explored in Proverbs, it is important who we spend our time with on a regular basis.

13:20 – “Walk with the wise and become wise. Associate with fools and get in trouble.”
(New Living Translation)

22:24-25 – “Don’t hang out with angry people; don’t keep company with hotheads. Bad temper is contagious – don’t get infected.” (The Message)

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33. If we want to reach out to others, how do we apply this principle practically to our lives?

“Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back – in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is what you are wolfing down is yourself. The chief skeleton at the feast is you.” – Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*

What Do Angry People Do? What Do Wise People Do?

As the Proverbs compare wisdom and foolishness, anger is included in the description of the fool, not the wise man.

14:17 – “Short-tempered people do foolish things, and schemers are hated.”

(New Living Translation)

15:18 – “A hothead stirs up a fight but one who holds his temper calms disputes.” (God’s Word)

16:32 – “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” (New American Standard)

19:11 – “Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

(New Living Translation)

20:2-3 – “The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life. Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel.”

(New American Standard)

25:28 – “A person without self-control is like a house with its doors and windows knocked out.”

(The Message)

29:8 – “Mockers create an uproar in a city, but wise people turn away anger.” (God’s Word)

29:11 – “Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.” (New Living Translation)

29:22 – “An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.”

(New American Standard)

Read Genesis 4:3-8. What role did anger play in Cain murdering Abel? Take a look at Numbers 20:8-12. Did anger play a role in Moses’ disobedience? What are some constructive ways we can process the emotions of anger without allowing it to draw us into sin?

Exercise for Processing Anger

By Bill Flatt in *Restoring My Soul*

	<i>Controlled by Anger</i>	<i>Free from Anger</i>
Advantages	Can tell people off Can punish people Can get it off my chest	Can control speech Can be more constructive Can be more balanced Can succeed
Disadvantages	Will make enemies Will have lots to take back Can hurt innocent people Can cause regrets	Maybe being angry will cause me to take the action I need to take, to do something constructive as Jesus did.

Thinking through this exercise might help us find constructive ways to deal with anger. One of the challenges of responding in anger is that we often don’t stop and think about the consequences. This chart helps us do just that.