



Session 3

Anger

Managing intense displeasure

It doesn't seem fair. It's not right. So much has happened that just. Makes. Your. Blood. Boil. What are you supposed to do with all this anger?

This week's **video**, **On My Own** exercises, and **My Weekly Journal** will answer that question and provide insights to help you handle this intense emotion. You'll learn:

- **How anger might be helpful in your situation**
- **How anger might be harmful in your situation**
- **How to manage your anger**



VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you may have while viewing the video.

ANGER CAN BE HURTFUL

ANGER CAN BE HELPFUL

Anger has a legitimate role

*"Be angry and do not sin;
do not let the sun
go down on your anger."*

Ephesians 4:26 ESV

Anger sets boundaries

Anger is energy for the hard times

ANGER CAN BE SUBTLE

- In critical comments
- In the silent treatment
- In withholding from people

ANGER CAN BE MANAGED

Be patient with yourself

Watch out for bitterness

- Do you think I'm bitter?
- Am I wishing my ex harm?
- Am I pulling back from people?
- Am I overreacting?

Avoid venting verbally or physically

Take time for a deep breath

"We know from research that the more you give vent to anger, the more anger you're going to have."

Dr. Linda Mintle

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

James 1:19b

Use gentle responses

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

Proverbs 15:1

Take a time-out

- Pray
- Listen to uplifting music
- Exercise
- Get counsel from a wise friend
- Think through your goals
- Think of it like a business

*"What causes fights and quarrels
among you? Don't they come from
your desires that battle within you?"*

James 4:1

Ask yourself some key questions

- Would I teach my children to do this?
- In the bigger scheme of things, what's the best course of action?
- What would someone I look up to do?

*"Bless them that curse you, do good
to them that hate you, and pray for
them which despitefully use you."*

Matthew 5:44b KJV

Take your anger to God



Additional help

- When you want to lash out ————— p. 25
- How do I get control over anger? — p. 25
- But I'm still angry ————— p. 27

ON MY Own

Wisdom and encouragement for your new journey



ELSA'S STORY

"My anger didn't come out in bombs—more like hand grenades. I would snap at my daughter. I'd be driving down the road and someone would cut me off, and I would %#@%#%. I'd stub my toe, and I'd be cursing. All of this anger was sitting inside me that I didn't want to acknowledge." Whether your anger tends to explode or lies under the surface at a slow, constant simmer, this week you'll learn how to feel, express, and deal with anger in healthy ways.

1

HOW DO I HANDLE ALL THIS ANGER?

Let's face it. Some people know how to push your buttons. And when they do, how well do you handle it? There are many ways to handle anger—and not all of them are good for you. In fact, some responses will hurt you even more than the other person. Even when your anger is justified, God knows it can quickly lead to unhealthy reactions. This is what He wants to help you avoid.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19b)

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" (James 4:1)

1. What actions or behaviors tend to make you angry? How do you usually respond?

2. According to James 1:19, what is the best way to respond?

3. James 4:1 talks about desires and motives that create inner conflict, which can spill out and affect your relationships. How do you see this playing out in your life?

REMEMBER

- You're going to experience anger. When you do, it's your response that matters.
- Here's what being quick to listen might look like:
 - Not interrupting
 - Not planning your response while the other person is speaking
 - Removing distractions to offer your full attention
 - Confirming your understanding of the other person's point of view, hurts, and desires before sharing your own

"I have to find a healthy way to deal with [my anger]." – Chuck

2

WHEN YOU WANT TO LASH OUT

Maybe your frustration simmers beneath the surface. You snap at the kids at breakfast. You grumble as your boss gives you yet another responsibility. You find out what your ex did last night and the texts start to fly.

What happens when you react with a quick temper? It might feel like the natural thing to do, but it only ends up making things worse. But God wants good things for you. So, He explains a better way to handle these moments.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

"A quick-tempered person does foolish things." (Proverbs 14:17a)

"Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble." (Proverbs 21:23 NLT)

1. How short is your fuse?

- ☐ I tend to be quick-tempered.

- ☐ I'm patient in some situations, but I get angry and lash out in others.
- ☐ I can usually hold my tongue and remain calm.

2. According to Proverbs 15 and 21, what are good ways to respond when you or someone else is angry?

3. Think about a scenario in which you regularly get angry. Give an example of a gentle (mild) response you could use when you're tempted to lash out.

REMEMBER

- When you feel your temper starting to boil, ask God to help you respond with a gentle answer—or give you the strength to say nothing at all.
- Before you speak, consider: Is what I'm about to say beneficial for everyone involved?

"Lashing out accomplishes nothing."

– Dr. Stephen Viars

3

HOW DO I GET CONTROL OVER MY ANGER?



It's not uncommon to lose your temper when talking to your ex. But it's not the best thing either. What

can you do to avoid exploding? Or to avoid shutting down and dodging the issue? If your anger drives you to these types of reactions, which only make the problem worse, it would be appropriate to take a “time-out.” Use that time to process your anger and to prepare for addressing the conflict.

APPLY THE TRUTH

Several years back, Leslie Vernick was looking for a way to control her temper. While reflecting on her problem, she came up with questions to help her manage her anger. See if these questions will help you figure out why you’re getting upset and how to respond differently.

T	What’s my TROUBLE?	State what’s making you angry.
	What’s my RESPONSE?	Is this the best response? You can’t control other people’s actions, but you can control your response.
U	What’s going on UNDER-NEATH?	Check what’s motivating you. E.g., is it a desire for control, for respect, or to get your way?
	What’s the TRUTH?	Your feelings do not always indicate truth. What does the Bible say is true about you, the other person, and your conflict?
H	How will my HEART* change?	What new perspective do you need to adopt about you, the other person, and your conflict? What preferences do you need to stop insisting upon?

* Biblically speaking, the heart is the source of a person’s values, thoughts, and desires.

“I was a fuse waiting to be lit.” – Mary Lou

4

WHY SHOULD I GET RID OF MY ANGER?

Take a look at the consequences of anger described in the Bible.

GOD’S MESSAGE TO YOU

“For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.” (Proverbs 30:33)

“An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.” (Proverbs 29:22)

“24 Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, 25 or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.” (Proverbs 22:24–25)

1. Proverbs 30:33 shows that stirring up anger will bring consequences. What is the consequence that’s named here? And do you really want more of this in your life?

2. What are the effects of your anger, according to Proverbs 29:22?

3. Proverbs 22:24–25 describes the effects an angry person will have on others. Based on this passage, how might your children be affected by your unhealthy anger?

REMEMBER

- “When you feel the heat rising, you have to be very careful about what you say. You can’t take back words, and the damage that does sometimes is irreparable.”
– Dr. Crawford Loritts

- If you find yourself becoming bitter and angry, ask yourself, “Do I really want to be that kind of person?”

5 BUT I’M STILL ANGRY

Maybe it was one big disagreement. Or maybe 1,000 little ones. Either way, you may find yourself still angry long afterward. You’ve been hurt, and it’s hard to let it go. But holding on to anger isn’t doing you any good. In fact, it’s hurting you. And you might not realize just how much.

GOD’S MESSAGE TO YOU

“26 And ‘don’t sin [disobey God] by letting anger control you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26–27 NLT)

- 1. Think of a disagreement you’re having with someone that hasn’t been resolved. How has it been affecting you (e.g., physically, emotionally, behaviorally)?**
- 2. Ephesians 4 does not say being angry is necessarily wrong. What does it say about anger?**
- 3. Giving “a foothold to the devil” basically means you’ve created another opportunity for division to occur between you and the other person. According to Ephesians 4, what can you do to prevent another hurtful division in your life?**

REMEMBER

You can’t always fix everything before sunset, but you can commit to resolving disagreements as soon as possible.

You might feel your anger is justified. How can you know for sure? Determine if you’re angry about something that offends God. If it is, your anger is warranted—but it’s still your responsibility to respond wisely.

BRIGHTER DAYS

ELSA’S STORY

“Handling anger in a God-honoring way was a process for me. Because I was an avoider, I thought that God wanted me to stuff it down, that I wasn’t supposed to be angry. But that’s not true. There are things worth being angry about. [I realized] it’s okay to be angry about injustices that were done to me and my daughter.

“I’m a journaler, so I would spend a lot of time processing my anger in a journal and talking to God (I am angry about ...). It’s like in the Psalms: David would start a psalm ticked off about something, and at the end he is praising God. So acknowledging it, writing about it, and then saying, ‘But God, You are good,’ is ultimately how I ended up processing anger.”

NEXT SESSION

How to deal with grief, depression, and guilt.

MY WEEKLY Journal

If you find yourself struggling with being irritable, easily frustrated, and quick to “snap” at people in anger, then use your weekly journal to evaluate a recent situation in which you got angry. Here are some statements to get you started:

1. I got irritated/angry when ... (Describe the circumstances.)

2. I did and said ... (Describe your reactions.)

3. The outcome was ... (Describe the consequences of your reaction.)

4. Based on what the Bible says in passages like James 4:1–3, Proverbs 13:3, and Proverbs 15:18, the outcome might have been better if I had ...

CHART YOUR PROGRESS

Place a check in the boxes to identify how you are feeling in each area this week: emotionally, physically, etc. Even better? Substitute a word or two to describe how you are doing.

	REALLY BAD	OKAY	PRETTY GOOD	GREAT
Emotionally				
Physically				
Spiritually (closeness to God)				
Relationally (closeness to others)				
How your life is in general				

FOR Parents

How to respond to temper tantrums

With separation and divorce come unwanted change, stress, and loss. It's pretty common for your children to be overwhelmed with emotions and for the stress to come out in the form of anger.

Their bucket may be filled to the brim, and one more drop (which might seem like a trivial thing) can make them tip over. The result is angry outbursts at home, at school, and anywhere, really—even at church.

So what are you supposed to do when your child erupts? Here are 10 things you can do to help.

1. **Provide privacy:** If your child is having a meltdown in front of a group, try to separate him from the others. The last thing your child needs in that moment is an audience.
2. **Give comfort:** If possible, give the child comfort at the moment by placing your hand on her shoulder and talking in a low, controlled voice. This might be enough to calm some children.
3. **Describe their response:** If the child is raging, don't try to touch him, but describe what his body is doing: "Your face is going like this. Your shoulders are doing this." When some kids become angry, the fight-or-flight response is in control. They literally can't think beyond how their body is reacting. When you describe what their body is doing, they'll usually turn and re-engage with you.
4. **Offer empathy:** As the child looks at you, show her you can relate to how she is feeling by repeating what she said as a question: "You're upset because you wanted to stay at your dad's today? I understand because sometimes when I get to visit someone, I don't want to come back either."
5. **Ask about helping:** Ask your child, "What can I do to help you?" If the child makes a reasonable request, honor it. If not, simply say, "Hmm, that's not possible. How about if I _____?" and offer another idea.
6. **Offer choices:** As the child settles down, offer two choices, such as rejoining whatever activity was going on or sitting alone for a while.
7. **Try conversation:** Sometimes, right after an emotional explosion is the time children want to talk. This can turn into an intimate time when you can impact the child with love.
8. **Encourage them to rehydrate:** Raging can drain children, and water will help them rehydrate. Offer your child some water, or tell him to get a drink of water. This gives him the chance to move out of the area where he had the rage and allows his brain to move forward with a different thought.
9. **Teach them to breathe:** Deep breathing exercises can help keep your children calm in the future. "Deep breathing" means slowly taking in a breath through the nose while pushing out the belly, and then slowly breathing out through the mouth. Breathing slowly sends calming signals to the brain.
10. **Turn to Scripture:** Offer Scripture for your children to refer to when they are struggling with anger. Here are some ideas:
 - "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." (James 1:19)
 - "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)