

Fool Proof: A Study in Proverbs

Week 5 | Anger

Day 1

Mark and Shelly Nelson, authors

We'll begin our week hearing from Jimmy Miller, one of Bruce and Tamra's sons. This Sunday he will be sharing how anger is characterized in Proverbs, how God's wisdom warns against it, and why. Watch this video as Jimmy introduces what happens to those who are ruled by anger and why it leads to loneliness.

Watch Jimmy: <https://vimeo.com/569882889>

Ask yourself

- How have you witnessed anger on social media? Have you ever been emotional in your posts?
- Why do you think anger can lead to loneliness?
- Where have you seen anger celebrated or used to entertain? Was there a perception of self-righteousness?

Pray

*LORD, you are compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in love.
We are grateful for your mercy that holds back your wrath against sinners.
Teach us to live in your grace and speak your love so others may see your
kindness through us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, who bore your wrath against sin for us.
Amen.*

Talk about it

If you haven't found someone with whom you can "talk about it" yet, this would be the week to do it. Anger can be a very personal matter. Having someone else to process through our questions this week can give insight and broaden your perspective on how to handle your own anger or the anger of others.

- In the video, Jimmy encouraged us to make a list of things that caused us anger throughout the day. Discuss items you are comfortable sharing, to see where you may have similarities. How can these shared experiences lead to growth? Make a note to check in with each other later in the week to see what else you've added to your list.

Day 2

Mark and Shelly Nelson, authors

Today we want to look at the wisdom in Proverbs to better understand how we can be perceived because of our acts of anger. These passages highlight a quick temper and hasty words to describe foolish behavior. As we seek wisdom in this study, we need to grasp how God handles anger. It's true! Even God gets angry.

Read

Proverbs 14:17 (ESV)

*A man of quick temper acts foolishly,
and a man of evil devices is hated.*

Proverbs 14:29 (ESV)

*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding,
but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.*

Proverbs 29:20 (ESV)

*Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Ask yourself

- Have you ever regretted - felt foolish - for becoming angry?
- How much time is there between your feeling of anger and your expression of anger?
- What do you know about the anger of God?

Read what others say

From Colin Smith:

“When we speak about the wrath of God, remember that it is the wrath **of God**. Everything that we know about Him—that He is just, that He is love, and that He is good—needs to be poured into our understanding of His wrath.

The words ‘anger’ and ‘wrath’ make us think about our own experience of these things. You may have suffered because of someone who is habitually angry. Human anger can often be unpredictable, petty, and disproportionate. These things are not true of the anger of God. God’s wrath is the just and measured response of His holiness towards evil.

...

The divine wrath toward sin was poured out, or spent, on Jesus. He became the ‘propitiation’ for our sins (Rom. 3:25) as He became the sacrifice for us. This big word ‘propitiation’ means that the recompense or the payment for our sins was poured out on Jesus at Calvary.

The outpouring of God's wrath on Jesus Christ was the greatest act of love this world has ever seen. And Jesus stands before us today, a living Savior. He offers to us the priceless gift of peace with God. He is ready to forgive your sins and to fill you with His Spirit. He is able to save you from the wrath and to reconcile you to the Father. He has opened the door of heaven, and He is able to bring you in. Are you ready to find peace with God through Him?"¹

Pray

- Recognize God for his patience - not just in general with the world, but with you. Acknowledge that Jesus received the wrath of God that you were due.
- Confess specific times in recent days when you've been like the fool who was quick-tempered instead of slow to anger.
- Ask the Spirit to make you aware of when your temper is leaning toward foolishness and to guide you in how to handle situations in a godly way.

Talk about it

- When do you feel justified in your anger? How does that compare with how God handles his righteous anger?
- If a "hasty temper exalts folly", how could being "slow to anger" exalt God in your life instead?
- How has a "quick temper" impacted your relationships with others? What can you do to restore those relationships?

¹ Colin, Smith, "Five Ways God's Anger is not Like Ours" Unlocking the Bible, (August 21, 2020) <https://unlockingthebible.org/2020/08/five-ways-gods-anger-not-like-ours/>

Day 3

Mark and Shelly Nelson, authors

Becoming “Fool Proof” won’t happen overnight. Removing anger and quick-tempered behavior from our lives won’t magically disappear either without God’s help or our commitment to better understanding.

As we’ve been reading these proverbs - that at times feel like they should be unfolded from a fortune cookie - we have to commit ourselves to understanding their style also. We can apply basic principles of Bible study to a single verse just as we would if studying another entire book of scripture.

Read

Proverbs 15:1 (ESV)

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

Proverbs 16:32 (ESV)

*Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Ask Yourself

- What does it mean to be “slow to anger”?
- Do you view God as loving or angry?

Explore on your own

Reading Biblical wisdom literature can be like reading Shakespeare in junior high or understanding a figure of speech in a foreign language. The Proverbs are not rules *per se* like the ten commandments, and as we’ve said in prior weeks, they are not if-then lines of programming for God to follow. These are meant to be memorable, practical words of wisdom to guide us into a godly life.

In our two verses today we can see how each couplet emphasizes its point by either giving a comparison (soft answer vs. harsh word) or restating the same idea, like when we say “in other words.” But understanding these passages also requires understanding the word meanings at the time it was written. Forms of the Hebrew word *aph* are often translated anger or angry, but the real meaning is “nose” - like the snorting sound we make when we hear or see something we don’t really care for. *You know you’ve done it.*

The Bible project has an entertaining, animated [five-minute video](#) to help us understand the language behind being “slow to anger” and how God has demonstrated what this means throughout scripture. Be sure to watch this and find someone with whom you can talk about it this week. (Seriously, watch it. It’s helpful!)

Pray

- Reflect on times in your life when God has been slow to anger with you. Confess what is sin and thank him specifically for giving you another chance...and another.
- Think about times in your life when you've had a "hot nose." Ask God to help you rule your spirit and demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit through self-control.

Talk about it

- If you are unfamiliar with any of the Bible stories mentioned in the video, read through them. Discuss how God was slow to anger yet acted within his character to display anger.
- Think about the items on your list you started on Day 1. How do you recognize when you feel a "hot nose" coming on? What are the triggers to your anger?
- On a scale of zero to ten, where is your self-control? What needs to happen in your life to move up that scale in order to rule your spirit?

Day 4

Mark and Shelly Nelson, authors

Fight or Flight. These two natural reactions have been associated with our survival as the human race. The instincts we have to deal with danger are rooted in our emotional responses. Anxiety is the fear or worry that comes from a real or perceived threat. Anger is also a response to a threat but builds on that fear or worry with a feeling of annoyance.

Research has linked anxiety and anger together as responses when we lose control. We've seen this theme of maintaining control in our proverbs this week. If you feel like you're dealing with something you're not sure how to handle, you may become anxious. And when the threat grows your anxiety turns to anger. Some suggest anger is a root cause of anxiety; individuals who have not learned how to properly express their anger may face long-term anxiety or turn their anger inward as negative self-talk.

As we've looked into anger this week, we see that anger is not in and of itself evil. We are created in the image of God, and even God gets angry. Though God expects we will experience this emotion, Ephesians 4:26 exhorts us to keep this emotion in check — "in your anger do not sin."

Read

Proverbs 25:28 (NIV)

*Like a city whose walls are broken through
is a person who lacks self-control.*

Proverbs 29:8 (NIV)

*Mockers stir up a city,
but the wise turn anger away.*

Proverbs 29:11 (NIV)

*Fools give full vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end.*

Ask yourself

- How can I be angry and not sin?
- Is my pent-up anger causing anxiety in my life?

Read what others say

From Dr. Gary Collins:

One writer has suggested that people have four basic ways of dealing with anger. They can:

- **Repress** it. *Refusing to admit its presence or avoiding the situation through some type of addiction - anger that is denied will never be eliminated.*

- **Suppress** it. *Deliberately keeping it hidden from others which may lead to physical or psychological issues - anger that is turned inward is still not under control.*
- **Express** it. *Outbursts in destructive ways through verbal or physical attacks - anger that attacks can impact the innocent without resolving the situation.*
- **Confess** it: to God and others. *Admitting to feelings of anger, trying to determine the cause, and seeking to change the situation or see it from another perspective - confessed anger allows us to process the emotion without sin.²*

From *Soothing the Anger Through Wisdom*:

A very wise man once told me that the reason we become angry (in a sinful way) is because we cannot control something we desperately want to control. Therefore, when we become angry in a particular situation, it is because we want to control that situation - and are not content to submit ourselves to God's sovereignty and providence. When we become angry with someone it is because they are acting in a way that we cannot control. We are not content to submit ourselves to God in serving them - even if they do not act in a way that is consistent with how **WE** would control them if we could.

[Regarding Proverbs 29:11] What is interesting about this proverb is that we are told that the wise man "holds" his temper back. The word used for the holding back of our temper is the Hebrew word *shabach*, which mean to soothe or to still something. Here it is used of anger that rises up within us. The actual word for "temper" here is *ruach* which means spirit. We learn to hold back our spirit when it wants to react in anger. ... We need to have the spirit of God - who is patient, kind, and full of self-control - soothe our anger and keep us from reacting in rage or anger. A wise man knows this and practices it when he senses anger begin to rise up within him.³

Pray

God you know me well. You formed me from the inside-out. You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence.

Search me, God, and know my heart; examine me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me, and guide me on the road to eternal life.

(from Psalm 138)

Talk about it

- Though you may move between them based on the situation, which of the four ways of dealing with anger from Dr. Collins is most common for you?
- In what way do you need to submit to God in order to address anger in a current situation? How will his spirit help you soothe or still your anger?

² Gary R. Collins, Ph.D., *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, TX:Word, Inc., 1980), 106-108.

³ "Soothing the Anger Through Wisdom" Proverb a Day, (1/29/2011)

<https://www.calvarychapeljonesboro.org/proverb-a-day/soothing-the-anger-through-wisdom-proverbs-2911>

Day 5

Mark and Shelly Nelson, authors

So far this week, we've learned that fools have a "hot nose" and God has a slow fuse when it comes to anger. We know that seeking wisdom can help us manage inherent reactions so we can resolve situations in a way that does not lead to sin.

As we wrap up our study of anger in the book of Proverbs, we want to take a look at how applying this wisdom can improve our relationships.

Read

Proverbs 15:18

*A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict,
but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.*

Proverbs 18:14

*The human spirit can endure in sickness,
but a crushed spirit who can bear?*

Proverbs 19:19

*A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty;
rescue them, and you will have to do it again.*

Proverbs 22:24

*Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person,
do not associate with one easily angered.*

Ask Yourself

- What do you see in these proverbs about the impact of anger on relationships?
- Since everyone gets angry at some point, in your mind, what makes someone "hot-tempered"?
- What wisdom is shared about how to deal with "hot-tempered" people?
- Seems obvious, but why would you want to avoid someone with a "hot temper" who causes quarrels?

Read what others say

The Battle Within

From Dr. Gregory L. Jantz:

When relationships are unresolved, they lead to unfulfilled desires. These unfulfilled desires are constantly agitating within you, battling your best efforts at personal peace, contentment, and happiness. This battle leaves you weary and wary, angry and frustrated, which leads you

to fight and quarrel against yourself and others. Quarreling leads to a breakdown in relationship. Quarrels are often a red flag, pointing to diversionary anger.⁴

The Heart of Anger

As you read through this excerpt from *The Heart of Anger* by Christopher Ash and Steve Midgley, look at these six facets of anger from the perspective of how they impact your interactions with others. Think about the “new” suggestions and how they could reduce loneliness in your life.

Anger management is big business. ... Now, there is wisdom in secular anger management. Take regular exercise. Get enough sleep. Think ahead about how and when to have difficult conversations. Learn good-natured humor to defuse a crisis. Avoid sarcasm. Count to ten. ... So the question is, what can Christ do for our anger that anger management courses cannot?

1. Anger reveals the desires of the heart. So if my anger is to be healed I need a changed heart with ***new desires***.
2. Anger infects from the crowd. So I need a ***new crowd*** from whom to learn a better way.
3. I want to take revenge when badly treated; it churns me up. So I need some way to ***find peace*** and to heal my vengeful desires.
4. Anger has an explosive, dangerous power. It is too strong for me; there is a spiritual dimension to my anger problem. So I need a new ***spiritual power*** to subdue and redirect my anger.
5. Anger deceives because of my self-righteousness. So I need a ***new humbling***.
6. Anger is sometimes righteous but almost invariably results from mixed motives. So I need a ***new influence*** to purify my anger.

Explore on your own

Those who attend Christ Fellowship have free access to RightNow Media. You can find a variety of videos and studies for you and your family. [Please request access](#) if you haven't done that yet to take advantage of this valuable resource and watch this [four minute video](#) from Max Lucado on *The Fire of Anger*. His insights summarize our study this week to see how we can apply this wisdom to improve our relationships.

Talk about it

- You may have uncovered some unresolved anger in your life this week. It may be more obvious if you see yourself in this “hot-tempered” person who is prone to quarrels. Discuss how it is impacting your relationship with a specific person or how it is spilling out into other relationships. What do you want to do about it?
- In reading the six facets of anger, what's something “new” you need to pursue in your life to improve your relationships with others?
- Discuss what you took from Max's message. How will you broaden your *focus*, understand the *past* or begin to *pray* so you can resolve some anger before it burns you up?

⁴ Gregory L. Jantz, Ph.D., *Controlling Your Anger before It Controls You* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell Books, 2009).

Pray

Gracious Father, thank you for meeting me where I am this week. Thank you for shining your light into dark places of my heart that are harboring anger. Thank you for sharing your wisdom through the Word so I can understand how to be more like you. Spirit, teach me, guide me, protect me as I learn self-control.

Pray specifically over any individuals or situations God has revealed you need to address.

Coming next week

We are halfway through our study of Proverbs. Each week continues to build on the wisdom we've gained so far. Next week we'll welcome Bruce back and explore a topic that impacts individuals, families, and all of society. We'll look at the warnings and wisdom from Proverbs regarding alcohol.