

# CROSSING ATTITUDES

## Study Guide

### Lesson Three – Anger Without Sin

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Anger is simply an emotion. Just like joy or sorrow, anger is an emotion that we all experience. God blessed us with a full range of emotions because we are made in His image and God has a full range of emotions. In the Old Testament, we see that God has joy, sorrow, and anger. In the New Testament we see that Christ, who is fully God and fully Man, also had emotions such as grief, weeping, anger, and joy. Since Christ demonstrated many emotions and yet He never sinned, we need to realize that emotions themselves are not sinful. What makes an emotion sinful is the selfish attitude behind it.

Sinful anger is a powerful emotion that has a grip on many. Ungodly anger traps each of us from time to time, but for some anger has developed into a painful habit. Instead of letting anger boil to the point of spewing ugly, hurtful words, we each need to stop and examine the source. Unrighteous anger is always tied to a lie, usually wrapped up in fear, which gets us to focus on self. When angry, we are not resting in God's love in the situation, trusting Him to provide. In an outburst of sinful anger we don't have compassion for the other person or people in the room. Usually, when someone blows up there is pride (the need to be important) and defensiveness (the need to prove myself) involved. The ultimate solution to sinful anger is humility before God and genuine compassion for others.

- 1) The Bible describes both God and His Son, Jesus, demonstrating anger. Look up the following verses and describe what you learn about the Lord's anger:

Exodus 32:8-10

Numbers 32:10-13

Nehemiah 9:16-21

Psalms 145:8

Mark 3:1-6

Note: God's wrath is an expression of His holy love. If God is not a God of wrath, His love is no more than frail, worthless sentimentality; the concept of mercy is meaningless; and the Cross was a cruel and unnecessary experience for His Son. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers

2) God’s anger always stems from a heart of love. His anger towards sinful, rebellious people is because He knows that sin hurts. If you have a child who continually wants to play in the middle of the street, you will scold that child out of love for him because you want to keep him safe. If he continues to be rebellious and runs out into the street when you’re not looking, you will set up restrictions and disciplines to keep him safe. You will feel anger towards his rebelliousness because your heart’s desire is to keep him safe. The Lord knows that sin is dangerous to our well-being and He wants to keep us safe.

On the other hand, unrighteous anger is a self-centered anger. We are concerned with self-interests more than we are the interests of others. Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2. Verse 26 says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.” This verse indicates that it is okay to be angry as long as we don’t sin. It is possible to be angry without a self-centered motive.

Go through this passage carefully and create two lists. On one list write the selfish, sinful attitudes and behaviors and in the other list write attitudes and behaviors that please the Lord.

Sinful Attitudes and Behaviors	Godly Attitudes and Behaviors

Note: Ephesians 5:1-2 is an amazing verse when understood with the rest of Paul’s writings. To imitate God is to walk in love as Christ walked in love to the cross. Christ offered Himself up to God as an offering and a sacrifice because of His genuine love for us. When we set aside our selfish attitudes out of genuine love for those around us, we too offer up a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma!

3) In the Ephesians 4:26 passage above, the second word for anger (do not let the sun go down on your anger) in the Greek is “wrath” or “vengeance.” We need to get rid of feelings of wrath as soon as possible. Read Romans 12:17-19. What do these verses say about being vengeful?

4) Read Matthew 5:38-44. How does Jesus teach that we should react when someone wrongs us?

- 5) Think about your own life. Describe a time when you felt righteous anger. Then, describe a time when you felt unrighteous anger. How did you express unrighteous anger (i.e. the silent treatment, explosion, ridicule, sarcasm, talking the matter to death, etc.)?
- 6) Read James 4:1-3. What is the source of quarrels and conflicts? (James tells us in verse 2 that we lust and do not have so we commit murder. He may be referring to Jesus teaching in Matthew 5:21-22 that when we are angry we commit murder in our hearts.)
- 7) Listed below are examples of things that make us angry. Check off the ones that tend to trigger your anger. Next to the ones you checked off, write a lie or fear that is attached to each one. Now, write a truth from God's Word (this can be a favorite scripture verse or a generalized biblical truth.) Please share the truths during group time for those that may not know their Bible well.

	<b>Name the lie or fear attached to the anger</b>	<b>Name a truth from God's Word</b>
Being inconvenienced		
Being overwhelmed with too much to do		
Feeling unappreciated		
Feeling disrespected		
Feeling stupid		
Feeling like others should think the way you do		
Irritation that life isn't going your way ( <i>this could be anything from a traffic jam to a loss of a job</i> )		
Not getting something you think you deserve		
<i>Others?</i>		

Note: In his book, *Those Ugly Emotions*, Ken Campbell states, "Jesus Christ was never angry because of His own circumstances or His personal situation; He accepted good and bad circumstances as His Father's perfect will for Him. Rather than becoming angry with His potential killers, He felt compassion for them. He literally turned the other cheek and did not strike back when He was attacked. His anger was controlled and channeled constructively to deal with people and problems in an unselfish and righteous way."