

Unrighteous Anger

James 1:19-20

James 1:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹“*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger;

²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

Anger can shut down communication and break relationships apart. If suppressed, this emotion can turn into resentment, which poisons our thinking and behavior. Unchecked, it can boil over into an explosive expression of rage that hurts not only the intended recipient but others as well.

While we can think of many reasons to justify our anger, the only viewpoint that matters is the Lord’s. The book of Proverbs offers insight into how God views angry people. He says they act foolishly ([Proverbs 14:17](#)), stir up strife ([Proverbs 15:18](#)), and commit transgressions ([Proverbs 29:22](#)).

Proverbs 14:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of evil devices is hated.”

Proverbs 15:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute.”

Proverbs 29:22 (NASB)

²²“An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.”

He also warns us not to associate with such individuals ([Proverbs 22:24](#)).

Proverbs 22:24 (NASB)

²⁴“Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man.”

In contrast, those who are slow to anger have great understanding ([Proverbs 14:29](#)) and demonstrate wisdom ([Proverbs 29:8](#), [Proverbs 29:11](#)).

Proverbs 14:29 (NASB)

²⁹“He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.”

Proverbs 29:8 (NASB)

⁸“Scorners set a city aflame, But wise men turn away anger.”

Proverbs 29:11 (NASB)

¹¹“A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.”

Keeping one’s distance from strife also shows honor ([Proverbs 20:3](#)).

Proverbs 20:3 (NASB)

³“Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.”

In the New Testament, the apostle James compared the tongue to a small spark that can set a whole forest on fire ([James 3:5-6](#)).

James 3:5-6 (NASB)

⁵“So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

⁶And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell.”

He knew the damage a furious person could do. He also wrote that our anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires for us, nor does it fit who we are in Christ. Jesus paid our sin debt with His life in order to set us free from sinful behavior patterns and their repercussions.

There were a few instances when Jesus became angry, but they were fully in line with the Father’s purposes. In us, however, anger is usually born out of self-defense, hurt feelings, or thwarted desires. If the Lord has convicted you of unrighteous anger, confess that sin and allow the Spirit to reproduce Christ’s character in you.