

# Ephesians

Transformed by Grace, Empowered by Peace

Study 15

Overcoming Anger and Bitterness

Ephesians 4:25-32

Ephesians 4:25-27 (NIV)

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

**1) a) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. What is the difference between the Christian religion and other religions/the secular way when it comes to the topic of anger?**

A. There is no difference between how Christians respond to anger versus other religions

B. Other religions teach you to avoid, deny or suppress anger, Christianity sees anger as a double-edged sword, that can be used to address injustice(good) or lead to sin(bad).

**b) Discussion question. Does "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" mean we can't go to bed angry?**

No. It just means that to let the anger have a time limit.

**c) Discussion question. Ephesians 4:27 says not to let the devil a foothold. What other Bible stories showed a character giving the devil a foothold? (Watch this video for a clue:**

<https://youtu.be/5yZLFmVHfaw?si=XbHHmvXZRKHKmHyq>, consider playing it during the discussion time, it animates the "giving the devil a foothold" well)

Psalms 4:4-5(English Standard Version)

Be angry, and do not sin;

ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Offer right sacrifices,

and put your trust in the Lord.

Psalms 51:17

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

**d) Discussion question. According to Psalm 4:4-5 and Psalms 51:17, what should we do when we are angry? What kind of sacrifice should we offer to God when we are angry?**

Ephesians 4:28 (NIV)

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

**2) Discussion question. Can we assume there are no thieves in church?**

Ephesians 4:29-30 (NIV)

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

**3) Discussion question. According to Ephesians 4:29-30, what is the purpose of controlling what we say?**

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NIV)

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**4) a) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture, what are the signs of bitterness?**

Replay the evil grievances to yourself in your head

Replay the evil grievances to the person who hurt you, nagging them about it

Replay the evil grievances to the others through prayer requests: "Please pray for them, they did xxx to me"

Judging the person, passing a sentence to them

Wishing evil upon the person

Rejoice when they fail

Actively retaliate in some case

**b) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture slide, what is Paul trying to appeal to us to be instead of being bitter?**

|                                                                                                     |         |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| Paul is putting in a case history change on inside... all new                                       |         |          |
| Identity                                                                                            | Motives | Thinking |
| I cannot be vindictive                                                                              |         |          |
| I have the right to be angry, this was injustice, but I won't let it become malignant bitter hatred |         |          |
| I grant forgiveness before it is felt then anger will seep away                                     |         |          |
| I am forgiven                                                                                       |         |          |
| What God has done for me                                                                            |         |          |
| I can forgive others                                                                                |         |          |
| God is the judge, I don't need to be the judge                                                      |         |          |

Luke 7:45-47 (NIV)

You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

**c) Reflection question. Do you see yourself as forgiven little or forgiven much?**

#### **Takeaway**

In Ephesians 4:25-32, apostle Paul tells the Ephesian church on the topic of overcoming Anger and Bitterness, but instead we are to be kind, compassionate and forgiving, just as God has been to us.

## Case Study

### Case 1 – Anger and Bitterness

Peh See Eve has a controlling and micromanaging boss who doesn't care about her workload and keeps giving her a lot of work, so much so that she even has to do OT on weekdays to get the work done. One day, one of her colleagues couldn't take it and resigned. The boss then gave Eve all the workload that the colleague did, but did not increase her salary for the extra workload and even scolded Eve and confronted Eve when she did not meet the deadlines on time. Eve had to bring the work home on weekends to try to finish them but it's impossible because it's two people's worth of workload.

She then started getting bitter and she withdrew and sulked, giving the boss the silent treatment, she would comply with the boss on the surface but she is thinking of revenge internally. Since the work would never finish anyway, she becomes intentionally inefficient, doing her work slowly, to let the work problems accumulate and escalate before she resigns and leaves all the work for the boss to handle

**1) a) Discussion question. If you were in Eve's shoes, what would you do?**

**b) Discussion question. If you were Eve's friend in Lifegroup, what would you do?**

### Case 2– Excerpt from <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/types-of-anger/>

There are many types of anger:

#### 1. Assertive Anger

Assertive anger is considered a constructive form of anger expression. Rather than avoiding a conversation or being prone to outbursts of screaming or yelling, assertive anger is used as a healthy and productive expression of frustration to make positive change. This can look like expressing how you feel in a positive, safe way.

For example, you might start a statement with, "I feel angry when..." or, "I think...". Assertive anger is combined with appropriate body language and, sometimes, pre-set expectations about methods to resolve or process the situation. This gives you the chance to express your anger in a way that enables positive change.

#### 2. Behavioral Anger

Behavioral anger is a physical reaction and is common in men with anger issues. This can be dangerous as it may be expressed through violence, potentially slipping into destructive or displaced anger. Behavioral anger is impulsive and unpredictable, sometimes ending with

unhealthy legal or interpersonal consequences.

Behavioral anger can present as intimidating behaviors (e.g., cornering someone or raising your voice), throwing or shoving things, breaking things, or attacking someone. It's important to identify whether your anger is slipping into this area due to potential legal or interpersonal consequences.

### 3. Chronic Anger

Chronic anger is typically directed towards other people, situations, and even yourself, which can impact self-esteem. Sometimes, it can fly under the radar while simultaneously causing a lot of damage. Chronic anger often looks like a continuous, low-level feeling of anger, resentment, irritability, and frustration. Because of how you experience anger, you may have difficulty processing and expressing your needs, which can impact your health, stress levels, and relationships.

### 4. Destructive Anger

Destructive anger is a significantly unhealthy experience of anger that can have multiple negative impacts. While there is limited research on this type of anger, it's often seen in connection with the extreme end of behavioral anger. This may include extreme irritability or hatred of others, even when it isn't warranted.

Destructive anger can look like verbal or physical actions used to hurt others such as throwing and breaking something that is important to the person you're angry with. In relationships, this can sometimes present as stonewalling or shutting out your significant other emotionally. Destructive anger can impact many areas of your life in extremely unhealthy ways, potentially destroying important social connections.

### 5. Judgmental Anger

Judgmental anger is often a reaction to some perceived slight, someone else's flaws (if you feel they impact you), or an injustice against you or someone else. Judgmental anger is identified in people's core beliefs and basic perspective or understanding of the world. This core belief is generally one of feeling like you're better or worse than others, leading you to judge them and become angry about their actions or expressions.

Judgmental anger primarily looks like what people call "justified fury," when you or someone else is angry due to a perceived injustice or slight. This type of anger can also look like putting others down or ranting about a perceived injustice. This can have negative impacts on your interpersonal interactions and may limit your ability to maintain a support system. In addition, you may experience feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem.

## 6. Overwhelmed Anger

Overwhelmed anger is unpredictable and can impact your mental health over time. This type of anger builds up, especially when you don't find ways to express or communicate how you feel. It may show itself when things hit a "boiling point," or your ability to cope with anger and stress has been overwhelmed due to certain situations, feelings, or interactions.

Overwhelmed anger can look like a sudden snap of irritability and resentment following a long stretch of repression. While the expression of overwhelmed anger appears different for everyone, it will come on suddenly and may be preceded by a stressful event.

## 7. Passive-Aggressive Anger

Passive-aggressive anger is an avoidant form of expression. This kind of anger occurs when you suppress how you feel and attempt to avoid all types of conflicts. This can be dangerous, as your self-esteem levels are often impacted by anger. As such, passive-aggressive anger can have a negative influence on your relationships.

Passive-aggressive anger, which can be verbal or physical, includes emotional repression and avoidance of conflict. This may present as passive-aggressive comments (e.g., "I like your outfit, even though it doesn't fit you"), sarcasm, or an intentional lack of response. Passive aggression is most common in the verbal form, but it can also look like closed-off body language or continuous procrastinating at work.

## 8. Retaliatory Anger

Retaliatory anger is a common reaction and an instinctive response to being attacked. It can be influenced by a need for revenge after experiencing perceived hurt. This kind of anger is usually deliberately aimed at someone who hurt you and can be influenced by a need to gain control over an event. You may find yourself targeting your anger at specific people after feeling verbally or physically attacked. Retaliatory anger can potentially increase discomfort and anger levels in relationships.

## 9. Self-Abusive Anger

Self-abusive anger tends to be connected with shame. This type of anger is seen in people experiencing low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. Self-abusive anger is commonly used to help cope with these feelings, even though it only pushes people further away.

Self-abusive anger can affect you internally and externally. It can look like internalizing negative feelings and taking them out on yourself through self-harming behavior, alcohol or drug use, unhealthy and disordered eating, or negative self-talk (e.g., "You are a failure."). On an external level, this may include lashing out or attacking others verbally.

### 10. Silent Anger

Silent anger is a non-verbal, internal way of experiencing anger. Although you may not verbally express it, it is possible for others to read that you are angry. People who experience silent anger tend to keep these feelings inside and allow them to build up, which can lead to increased stress, tension, and behavior related to overwhelmed anger.

Silent anger can be an internal or external experience. Internally, this type of anger can create a build-up of uncommunicated frustration, anger, and resentment, causing undue stress and low levels of ongoing tension. Externally, it can present as closed-off body language and facial expression and restricted or minimal speech and tone.<sup>7</sup>

### 11. Verbal Anger

Verbal anger is an aggressive type of anger that can become abusive. Those who experience this type of anger are noted to feel remorseful after lashing out at the target of their anger and may even apologize after an episode. Verbal anger can present as lashing out or “going off” on someone verbally. Specific behaviors can include loud shouting, threatening behaviors, sarcastic comments, continuous and intense criticism, and ridicule. Keep in mind that verbal anger can transition into verbal abuse and also keep you from being able to maintain stable, healthy relationships.

### 12. Volatile Anger

Volatile anger is an explosive type of anger that is sometimes called “sudden anger.” It can happen when someone experiences an annoyance, big or small, and explodes verbally or physically, potentially becoming destructive. This type of anger makes it difficult for the individual to express themselves, process, and communicate.

Volatile anger can look like a rapid progression from status quo to outrage over real or perceived slights. It is frequently destructive and can include shouting, yelling, throwing things, and physical aggression. This type of anger may keep you from being able to maintain stable and trustworthy relationships.

**2) Reflection question. Based on the list, which type of anger are you susceptible to?**