



LESSON 4: "The Man of Anger" **Date:** _____

KEY VERSE: Proverbs 16:32 – "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty."

INTRODUCTION

Not long ago I read a news article about a man who jumped in a car and chased his nephew’s car through the streets of a town in West Virginia. When he finally caught up to his 21-year-old nephew, he pulled a gun and killed his own brother’s son. The whole incident began with an argument in a bar. As the police interviewed the uncle-assassin, they found that his motive was nothing more than anger. The murderer repeatedly told the interrogators that he simply “blew up.” This type of occurrence is by no means rare. People “blow up” all the time and the outcome can be catastrophic. But what causes such uncontrolled wrath? Is anger really harmful? Can anger be avoided? Isn’t anger sometimes justified? There are gigantic questions that can only be answered by searching the Scriptures.

Proverbs is by no means silent regarding the topic of anger. In fact, the writers of the Proverbs had such a great concern about this topic that they called on an arsenal of 13 different words to describe the condition that we know as anger, wrath, strife, or contention. This topic is so vast and so important that we will deal with it in two lessons. This session, “The Man of Anger,” will deal with the inner state of the one who finds himself in situations of strife and contention.

Our words “anger” and “wrath” sound simple, but the words that the authors originally used to describe the condition within the angry man were very descriptive. In fact, the original words painted six different pictures.

- **The flaring of the nostrils** — Have you ever seen an angry bull? As their anger mounts, their nostrils flare, and you suddenly become aware of the need to put a solid object between

yourself and the bull’s horns. This is the very picture painted by Proverbs 14:17, 29; 15:1, 15; 16:32; 19: 11; 20:2; 21:14; 22:24; 27:4; 29:8, 22; and 30:33.

- **A commotion-filled mind** — A person who is insane is said to have “gone mad.” In other words, he is suffering from a turbulent, commotion-filled mind. Proverbs 12:16; 21:19; and 27:3 present this same picture.
- **Something that is in excess** — Anger often causes people to lose control. Their emotions exceed the needs of the situation and their responses become impaired. This overflowing anger is seen in Proverbs 11:4, 23; and 21:24.
- **To be hot or red** — Red heads are often cited for their “quick” temper. Whether this is justified or not, we certainly understand the meaning behind the description of a “red-headed personality.” This description is alluded to by the writers of Proverbs in 14:17; 15:1, 18; 16:14; 19:19; 21:14; and 27:4.
- **To be indignant** — There are two further pictures of the angry man found in Proverbs. One simply means to be indignant (25:23) or angry with a justifiable cause.
- **To be gloomy** — The last word describes the angry man that is gloomy, sad, or depressed (19:12).

The angry man then is a complex character. He can be a raging bull, a man gone mad due to a tumultuous mind, a person who has totally lost control, a quick-tempered individual, someone who is indignant, or a depressive.

Theme: God wants the wise to have control over their anger.

Reference	The Angry Man	The Controlled Man
Prov. 15:18	He is an instigator.	He is an appeaser.
Prov. 14:29	He is foolish.	He is wise.

THE CAUSE OF ANGER

Let's begin this important study by looking at the causes of anger. Proverbs suggests at least four failures that cause anger. By understanding these causes we can better deal with our own anger and avoid sparking the anger outbursts of others.

1. *Anger fails to avoid pride.*

We've all seen it. A man is placed in a position with no easy way out. To back down will cause embarrassment, yet he knows that he is wrong. How will he respond? That's right, he'll blow up. Why? Because he "dealeth in proud wrath" (Prov. 21:24). Pride will initiate anger.

2. *Anger fails to offer soft answers.*

Have you ever heard someone say, "Yeah, what do you want now?!" when their name is called? How does the person receiving such an answer respond? What would seem to be the normal response? Anger! "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). We must watch our answers and our responses to avoid anger.

3. *Anger fails to be courteous.*

Some people have never mastered the ability to think ahead. Consequently, they often find their "foot in their mouth" or they become involved in a difficult situation. Angry individuals often fail to think ahead. They act upon impulse and need to learn that "The discretion (caution) of a man defereth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Prov. 19:11).

4. *Anger fails to build bridges.*

A friendly comment, a simple note, a kind remembrance. All of these things are "bridges" in our human relationships. These bridges are necessary. Without these bridges misunderstandings soon arise. With this in mind, the author of Proverbs 21:14 suggests that "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath." Take advantage of life's calmer moments to build the bridges necessary to cross life's difficult seas.

Failure to avoid pride, to offer soft answers, to be cautious, and to build bridges will cause angry situations. Realize this and by so doing, you will not only avoid your own angry outbursts but you will also be able to relate better to the man given to anger.

Transition: Having seen the causes of anger, let's consider the awful harm it brings.

THE HARM OF ANGER

After losing an important soccer game, a friend of mine kicked his locker so hard that he had to go to the hospital for x-rays. How do you think he would have responded if someone had asked him if anger was harmful? The truth is anger does tremendous harm.

1. *Anger brings personal pain.*

Studies have shown suppressed anger to be a major cause of stomach ulcers. "A stone is heavy, and the sand weighty: but a fool's wrath is heavier than them both" (Prov. 27:3). This Proverb is simply pointing out that anger is a burden to the one that bears it. This burden may be physical (Prov. 14:29-30) or emotional (Prov. 27:3).

2. *Anger makes relationships difficult.*

No man is an island. Each individual life affects the lives of those around him. The angry man's life will harm those with whom he associates. A person with an angry disposition does not make for an ideal companion. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman" (Prov. 21:9). You see, "wrath is cruel" (Prov. 27:4). The angry comment can do such terrible harm to the self-esteem of others that it is better to dwell alone than with the man of anger. As a youth pastor, I witness this truth often. The angry words of some junior highers are cruel to their hearers. Oh, the damage inflicted by the angry man. Not only does he harm himself, but he harms those who have the misfortune of associating with him.

3. *Anger provokes frequent failures (Prov. 19:19).*

4. **Anger destroys reputations (Prov. 12:16).**
5. **Anger leads to constant battles (Prov. 30:33).**
6. **Anger provokes cruelty to others.**

Transition: Because anger is so harmful, we must learn to avoid it.

THE AVOIDANCE OF ANGER

Some people say, “I’ve conquered my anger, but my friend sure has a problem. How should I deal with him?” This question is worthy of consideration. Proverbs has some advice to those who would associate with angry men.

1. **Strife will come.**

“An angry man stirreth up strife (Prov. 29:22). Many women today are involved in abusive marriage situations. Many of these abusive marriages were not abusive courtships. What happened? The young ladies failed to realize that an angry man stirs up strife with whomever he associates. Many battered wives rationalize their husband’s anger away by noting that he generally takes it out on others. But be assured, the angry man is not selective in where he stirs up strife.

2. **Anger is contagious.**

People involved in peaceful demonstrations run the risk of riot because of the emotion of the crowd. What do we mean by this? We mean that anger is contagious—it spreads. Proverbs warns us, “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Prov. 22:24-25). Indeed, it is better to be lonely than to associate with the man of anger (Prov. 21:19).

Transition: Let’s conclude by considering when anger is justified.

THE JUSTIFICATION OF ANGER

Nearly everyone is familiar with the story of Christ going into the temple and driving out the moneychangers. Was Christ wrong to be angry? Certainly not! Just when is anger justified?

1. **When it turns away gossip.**

Proverbs teaches us that an angry countenance is appropriate when we are confronted by a gossip. Why not? It seems that the gossip cannot learn otherwise, so we are instructed that “the north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue” (Prov. 25:33). Here, then, is our solution to the gossip—look mad.

2. **When God judges wickedness.**

The day of God’s judgment is called “the day of wrath” (Prov. 11:4). The wicked should expect to receive the wrath of God (Prov. 11:23). Christians are instructed to “be angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26). Our wrath should be aimed against Satan and against sin.

Anger should be avoided. By knowing some of the causes of anger and by understanding its harm, we can attempt to disassociate ourselves from angry men and reserve our anger for the times when it is justified. It is a trickle that becomes a stream. “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with” (Prov. 17:14). An uncle and a deceased nephew bear witness to the fact that anger should not be part of the wise man’s life. Understand anger and avoid it.