



SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD

Developing a Calm Spirit

Life Reference: Ephesians 4:23-32

Focus Verse:

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

We live in an angry world. It seems that each week we read of another instance of this anger breaking loose and spilling onto an innocent bystander. We have even coined a phrase to describe the aggressive, often deadly, anger displayed on our highways—road rage.



Anger is a destructive emotion, and it is often directed at those nearest us—our family, our fellow workers, or even our brothers and sisters in Christ. If someone says or does something we don’t like, they may receive a mean, curdling look, a rude comment, or a raised voice. Or, the angry one may refuse to talk, pouting and shutting the other out.

Life Reflection:

Have you ever been the victim of another’s anger or watched their anger spill out on someone else? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

Are there things that trigger anger in your life? How do you control that anger?

The Bible has much to say about the danger of anger and the need for self-control. These are just a few verses that instruct us on choosing to control our spirit and living above anger.

- "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger . . . A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (Proverbs 15:1, 18).
- "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).
- "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).

The Peril of Negative Thinking

Benjamin Franklin once said, "Anger is never without reason, but seldom a good one." Often anger is caused by negative thoughts. When something happens, we interpret it in a negative rather than positive or neutral way. When we think negatively, we create anger.

Negative thoughts, in turn, may cause us to feel threatened by the situation. When things don't go as expected, we may feel off balance, out of control, and challenged.

The final ingredient in anger is a rush of adrenaline. This hormone fuels our emotions by causing our heart to race, our respiration to increase, skin temperature to rise, and blood pressure to go up. Anger is definitely not a healthy emotion.

How to Subtract and Add

Ephesians 4:31 tells us, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (New King James Version).

That's quite a list. Let's look at it this way.



SUBTRACT THESE	ADD THESE
Bitterness (resentful, bitter fruit)	Kindness (considerate, compassionate)
Wrath (inflamed rage, wants revenge)	Tenderheartedness (understanding, sympathetic)
Clamor (demanding, noisy outcry)	Forgiveness (pardon, restore)
Evil speaking (slander, causing harm, pain)	As God...forgave (having a Christ-like spirit)
Malice (intentional harm)	

Life Reflection:

How does an angry spirit reflect on our Christian witness?

How should a Christian respond to the angry outburst of someone else?

Are there times when anger is justified? Please explain.

Life Response:

Analyze your anger style. Is it "in" or "out"? Do you shout, kick, break, slam (anger out)? Or do you pout, sulk, clam-up (anger in)? Neither way is productive. The best anger style is self-control. You may have to work at this if you are by nature very emotional or easily excitable. James 1:19 admonishes us to "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

You can control your response to situations and refuse to blow up or do a slow burn. Here are some steps you can use to defuse your anger.

1. Memorize Scripture and quote it when you feel anger rising.
2. Pray and turn it over to God. It then becomes His problem, not yours.



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3. Take a walk. Literally remove yourself from the situation until you have time to cool down and discuss the problem rationally.
4. Write it down instead of spilling it out. Lay it aside until the next day. (And then toss.)
5. If you still lose control, don't get discouraged. Ask God's help to do better next time.

If you use the above tools consistently, you will break the anger cycle. You will be exercising self-control. Solomon, a very wise man, said, "He who has knowledge spares his words, And a man of understanding is of a calm spirit (Proverbs 17:27).

"The fruit of the spirit is ... self-control"

—Galatians 5:23, NKJV

My Prayer:

Dear Lord, my desire is to be overflowing with Your Spirit so that I will always respond with kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness to those around me. Even when I face difficult situations and hurts from others, help me to put away any anger or bitterness that would poison my spirit and destroy my witness for you. My deepest desire is to produce the fruit of Your Spirit in my life and live abundantly in You.

More Life with God References:

Proverbs 17: 14, 27

Galatians 5:22-23

Ecclesiastes 7:9

I Peter 2:18-23

I Corinthians 9:27

II Peter 1:5-9

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