

I Declare War on Out-of-Control Anger
Message 4 of 6 in the series: "I Declare War"

A. Out-of-control anger will ruin our lives.

"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." Proverbs 29:11 (NIV85)

"Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood..." Proverbs 27:4a (NLT)

"...make sure no one lives with a root of bitterness sprouting within them which will only cause trouble and poison the hearts of many." Hebrews 12:15b (TPT)

"When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected. 'Why are you so angry?' the LORD asked Cain. 'Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.' One day Cain suggested to his brother, 'Let's go out into the fields.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him." Genesis 4:3-8 (NLT)

B. It is possible to learn how to handle anger appropriately.

"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." Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV)

"Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Stand up in front of everyone.' Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored." Mark 3:3-5 (NIV)

Note: Most of us haven't been taught how to deal appropriately with anger. We have simply followed the example of others (parents, siblings, coaches, etc.) who modeled inappropriate behavior because nobody taught them how to handle anger either.

C. Five things we can do to declare war on out-of-control anger:

1. We can get rid of wrong thinking about anger.

- Real Christians never get angry.
- Other people should never feel anger toward us.
- If we feel angry, someone else made us feel that way, and that person is responsible for fixing our feelings.
- If other people are angry with us, we must have made them feel that way, and we're responsible for fixing their feelings.
- If we feel angry, it's ok to hit someone or break something.
- If we feel angry, it's ok to yell, call names, and use profanity.
- If we feel angry with someone, it means we don't love that person anymore.
- If someone feels angry with us, it means that person doesn't love us anymore.

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12:2 (NLT)

2. We can detach/remove ourselves from explosive situations and give ourselves time and space to calm down so we can examine our thoughts, discover why we feel the way we do, and determine the best course of action to take.

"Don't sin by letting anger control you. Think about it overnight and remain silent." Psalm 4:4 (NLT)

"You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires." James 1:19b-20 (NLT)

3. We can seek Godly counsel.

"Plans succeed through good counsel; don't go to war without wise advice." Proverbs 20:18 (NLT)

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” Proverbs 12:15 (ESV)

4. We can deal appropriately with people and/or situations that make us angry.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1 (NIV)

“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.” Matthew 18:15-17 (NLT)

“Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the Lord. Instead, ‘If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.’” Romans 12:19-20 (NLT)

“...if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” Matthew 5:23-24 (NLT)

5. We can pray.

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.”
James 1:5 (NLT)

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:43-45a (NLT)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10 (NLT)

“May he (God) give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.”
2 Thessalonians 1:11b (NLT)

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Helpful Resources:

Al-anon / Al-ateen – for people affected by someone else's alcoholism – www.al-anon.org

Celebrate Recovery – A Christ-centered 12-step program – www.celebraterecovery.com

Codependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself, by Melody Beattie. Hazelden Publishing. (Her chapter on anger is very helpful.)

Questions for self-examination:

1. How did your parents/siblings/coaches/friends handle anger? Which behaviors do you want to copy? Which behaviors do you want to avoid?
2. What makes you angry? Would you describe yourself as hot-tempered or even-tempered? What would others say?
3. Who can you turn to for wise counsel when you get really angry?
4. Read Matthew 18:15-17 & Ephesians 4:26-27. How good are you at dealing with conflict? Do you hold grudges? Are you willing to get help when you need it?
5. Do you pray when you get angry? If so, for what do you pray? If not, why not?
6. Read Proverbs 15:1 & 19:11. Why is it usually a good idea to “sleep on it” before reacting to a problem?
7. What painful/hurtful situation do you need to surrender to God today?
8. Do you spend most of your time responding to God or reacting to others/circumstances?