

HELP!

GOD'S HOPE FOR THE HURTING

Angry

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 4:26-27,31-32

One Halloween evening, when he was about ten, Eisenhower's older brothers received permission to go out trick-or-treating, a more adventurous activity in those days than it is now. Ike wanted to go with them, but his parents told him he was too young. He pleaded with them, watched his brothers go, and then became engulfed by uncontrolled rage. He turned red. His hair bristled. Weeping and screaming, he rushed out into the front yard and began pounding his fists against the trunk of an apple tree, scraping the skin off and leaving his hands bloody and torn. His father shook him, lashed him with a hickory switch, and sent him up to bed. About an hour later, with Ike sobbing into his pillow, his mother came up and sat silently rocking in the chair next to his bed. Eventually, she quoted a verse from the Bible: "He that conquereth his own soul is greater than he who taketh a city." As she began to salve and bandage his wounds, she told her son to beware the anger and hatred burning inside. Hatred is a futile thing, she told him, which only injures the person who harbors it. Of all her boys, she told him, he had the most to learn about controlling his passions. When he was seventy-six, Eisenhower wrote, "I have always looked back on that conversation as one of the most valuable moments of my life."¹

Guilt is all about "I owe you." Whereas anger is all about "you owe me." Whenever you are hurt, whenever you are offended, whenever you are mistreated, there is a sense in which whoever hurt you has taken something from you. At work, he stole my idea, and he stole the recognition and the advancement that should have been mine. He owes me. When my dad left or my mom left, they stole stuff that was precious to me. They robbed me of the security and balance and the model that comes from having a mom and a dad who love us more than they love themselves. They owe me. When a man leaves his wife, he owes her a first marriage because he stood there and made a promise, a covenant. He stole something that was supposed to carry you through the tough times till death. Anger says, "You owe me." You owe me a reputation; you owe me a childhood. You owe it to me to have treated me with love, not lust. You owe it to me not to have abused me. You owe it to me to have been there when the times got tough like you promised. You owe me because of your unforgiveness, or your bitterness, or your cruel tongue, or your selfish heart, or your callous insensitivity, or your reckless spending. I'm angry because you owe me. You add to the list whatever you are angry about. He owed me, love. She owed me respect. They promised. Right? Guilt says, "I owe you." Anger says, "You owe me." And until it's dealt with, it sits down there, underneath our filters, corrupting our hearts, just like guilt. Anger destroys so much.²

¹ Smith, J. E. (2013). *Eisenhower: in war and peace*. Random House Trade Paperbacks.

² Stanley, A.; Stanley, A. (2017). *Enemies of the heart: breaking free from the four emotions that control you*. Multnomah Books.

OPEN IT

1. **What was something in your childhood that you got angry at?**

READ IT

EPHESIANS 4:25-26, 31-32

APPLY IT

Leading up to these verses in Ephesians, Paul has been helping his readers to understand that they had a brand new life when they became faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:17-23 read, “¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”³

2. **Why does Paul move from reminding his readers in Ephesus about being a new creation to talking about anger and other sinful actions?**

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3. How can you be a more effective follower of Christ if you reflect on being a new creation more often?

Proverbs does an excellent job of guiding us through our Christian lives by providing us with many words of wisdom. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 14:29 adds, “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.” You could also read Proverbs 15:18, Proverbs 22:24, and Proverbs 29:22. The bottom line is that anger is an actual sin that we have to deal with throughout our lives.⁴

4. I’m sure that you have seen someone in your life that shows great patience with seemingly everyone and everything. What are the characteristics of this individual?

5. When was a time that you should have implemented a soft answer so that you didn’t stir up anger?

⁴ Ibid.

The Bible talks about a time of righteous anger. Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry and do not sin." This verse implies that there are times when you can be angry and not sin. Psalm 4:4 says the same thing, "Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent." Anger is neither commanded nor entirely prohibited, but this is commanded not to permit sin to enter into anger: it is like poison, sometimes used as medicine. Still, it would be best if you managed it with the utmost caution.⁵

6. What is an example in scripture of a time when someone showed anger but did not sin?

7. What are some things that you get angry with that you believe would fall into the category of righteous anger?

⁵ Blackley, W. L., Hawes, J., & Bengel, J. A. (1885). *The critical English Testament: being an adaptation of Bengel's Gnomon, with numerous notes, showing the precise results of modern criticism and exegesis.* Richard D. Dickinson.

Throughout Paul's writings and elsewhere in the Bible, we are instructed not to be angry...to put it away. Verse 31 of Ephesians 4 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Likewise, Colossians 3:8, 1 Peter 2:1, and Psalm 37:8 all remind us to remove anger from our lives.⁶ Some people have dealt with a lot of trauma in their lives caused by someone intentionally, including the murder of a loved one. Paul was in prison when writing Ephesians for crimes that he was falsely accused of, yet he taught the Ephesians to put away their anger.

8. How could someone not be angry with another who intentionally harmed them?

9. What are some specific ways that you have been able to deal with anger in your life?

⁶ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

The end of the fourth chapter of Ephesians focuses on forgiveness. Paul's point here is to let us know that forgiveness is the antidote to anger. Just as Jesus has forgiven us, we are to forgive one another. If we allow anger to harbor in our hearts for any length of time, it will increase the anger and move into other sins (bitterness, malice, etc.). When I was in high school, I jammed my big toe several times. Since then, my big toe has hurt every time it got bumped. Recently, my heel started hurting on that same foot. It hurt so much that I went to the foot doctor to get it dealt with. However, when I went in to deal with my heel issue, the doctor informed me that I actually had a big toe issue. Since I didn't deal with the big toe issue, it had moved into my heel. The doctor said I needed surgery on the big toe, and that would restore the heel.

10. Why is forgiveness the antidote for anger?

11. Take five minutes with the Lord and think about who you need to forgive. It could be someone from childhood, your workplace, your family, or just the guy who works at the local grocery store. If you have been angry with someone, you need to seek forgiveness.