

The Right Way to Get Mad

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph. 4:26, ESV).

God gives us permission to be angry. Anger is as valid a human emotion as joy, sorrow, faith and fear. But when an emotion like anger is suppressed because it is not validated, it will eventually be expressed inappropriately. Conversely, if an emotion is expressed without restraint, then sin will follow upon its heels.

The definition of *anger* is “strong, usually temporary displeasure without specifying manner of expression.” It encompasses the word *temporary*, which means “momentary, passing, short-lived, or fleeting.” Therefore, anger by definition should be brief and transitory, not drawn out and dangerous.

Too frequently we live in a constant state of flare-up punctuated by brief interludes of happiness. God models the healthy type of anger for us: “For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime” (Ps. 30:5, NIV).

God in His anger may temporarily turn His face away, but He does so for resolution not for rejection. He understands our need to look away or walk away from the source of displeasure to prevent a destructive venting of anger. We do not walk away from others to punish them; we turn away so the embers of anger can cool and reason can again rule our hearts.

In the New International Version, Ephesians 4:26 says, “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” I believe the sun going down means the end of your day or an appropriate amount of time. When anger exceeds this temporary stage, it progresses toward the destructive ledge of being angry and sinning. Then the heart is in danger of becoming a hotbed for a root of bitterness.

Don't let the bitter root into your heart! Do you hold onto your anger longer than you should? Go to God in repentance. Ask His Spirit to give you wisdom and grace so that you can be angry but without sin.

Adapted from Be Angry But Don't Blow It: Maintaining Your Passion Without Losing Your Cool (Thomas Nelson, 2000) by Lisa Bevere.