

# Wisdom for Anger

*Topical*

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I was an angry person.

Long, deep frustrations with not understanding the world, the culture I was thrown into upon returning from Africa.

Very little experience in developing relationships and therefore almost no interpersonal skills.

Being self-aware that I was different and then taking pride in being, well, a little weird.

Suppressed anger (clammer-upper) that eventually exploded in a situation in High School where I beat a kid, almost to death.

All this wrapped in a self-righteous, placed, seething dislike for people....

And then conversion, grace, the Word and discipleship. God brought all within 3 years that wrought a great change in my life...

Two keys that helped with that transformation?

I was recognizing that I was easily angered though I might not express it outwardly.

I went through the book of Proverbs and read every verse on anger, wrath and strife.

There is much more to say about anger than just from the book of Proverbs. However, that is the focus of our study. What wisdom can we learn from this book?

## Three primary Words

Here is a sample of those verses then we will consider them from a more thematic approach.

### ***Proverbs use of Anger***

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (15:1)

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. (15:18)

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. (29:22)

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. (14:29)

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (16:32)

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (19:11)

A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again. (19:19)

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. (22:24-25)

Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

### ***Proverbs use of Wrath***

Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? (27:4)

A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass. (19:12)

The king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it. (16:14)

The king's wrath is like the growling of a lion; he who provokes him to anger forfeits his life. (20:2)

A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. (27:3)

An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression. (29:22 NKJV)

## ***Proverbs use of Strife***

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. (17:14)

It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling. (20:3)

For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. (26:20)

As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. (26:21)

Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease. (22:10)

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses. (10:12)

## **Themes on the topic of anger**

One possible way to approach all the verses on anger, wrath and strife from the book of proverbs in the Bible is to use a thematic approach. This means grouping the verses according to the main idea or message they convey about these topics. For example, some verses warn about the negative consequences of anger, wrath and strife, such as Proverbs 15:18: "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." Other verses advise how to avoid or deal with anger, wrath and strife, such as Proverbs 19:11: "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." Yet other verses contrast anger, wrath and strife with their opposites, such as Proverbs 14:29: "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly."

Therefore, it is helpful to identify the main themes and messages that the book of Proverbs teaches about these topics. It would also help to compare and contrast different proverbs and see how they relate to each other. Let us consider them as well as some insights and applications based on the wisdom of Proverbs. Because of the nature of proverbs, many of these will occur in more than one theme. Therefore, expect some repetition but a different emphasis.

### ***Dealing with the Consequences of Anger***

The first major theme is about the dangers and consequences of anger, wrath and strife. These verses warn us that being angry, wrathful or contentious can lead to many problems, such as folly, transgression, trouble, violence, hatred and death. They also show us that anger, wrath and strife can affect not only ourselves, but also others around us, such as our families, friends and neighbors. Some of the verses in this category are:

<sup>12</sup> Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses. (10:12)

<sup>29</sup> Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart. (11:29)

<sup>17</sup> A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. (14:17)

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (15:1)

<sup>18</sup> A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. (15:18)

<sup>28</sup> A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends. (16:28)

<sup>14</sup> The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out. (17:14)

<sup>19</sup> Whoever loves transgression loves strife; he who makes his door high seeks destruction. (17:19)

<sup>6</sup> A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. (18:6)

<sup>19</sup> A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle. (18:19)

<sup>3</sup> It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling. (20:3)

<sup>24</sup> Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, <sup>25</sup> lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. (22:24-25)

<sup>17</sup> Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears. (26:17)

<sup>21</sup> As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. (26:21)

<sup>3</sup> A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. (27:3)

<sup>4</sup> Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? (27:4)

<sup>25</sup> A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched. (28:25)

<sup>8</sup> Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath. (29:8)

<sup>22</sup> A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. (29:22)

<sup>33</sup> As pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife. (30:33)

### ***Avoiding or Resolving of Anger***

Another important theme is about the benefits and blessings of being slow to anger, gentle and peaceful. These verses encourage us to be patient, calm, kind and forgiving when dealing with others, especially those who offend or provoke us. They also teach us that being slow to anger, gentle and peaceful can bring us many advantages, such as understanding, honor, life, joy and favor. Some of the verses in this category are:

<sup>18</sup> There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (12:18)

<sup>16</sup> One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless. (14:16)

<sup>18</sup> A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. (15:18)

<sup>7</sup> When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. (16:7)

<sup>14</sup> A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it.

<sup>15</sup> In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain. (16:14-15)

<sup>15</sup> With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. (25:15)

<sup>32</sup> Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (16:32)

Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife. (17:1)

<sup>9</sup> Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. (17:9)

<sup>11</sup> Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. (19:11)

<sup>22</sup> Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you. (20:22)

<sup>14</sup> A gift in secret averts anger, and a concealed bribe, strong wrath. (21:14)

<sup>10</sup> Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease. (22:10)

<sup>17</sup> Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles,

<sup>18</sup> lest the Lord see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him. (24:17-18)

<sup>20</sup> For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.

<sup>21</sup> As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.

<sup>22</sup> The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. (26:20-22)

### ***Contrasting anger, wrath and strife with their Opposites***

One of the themes that appears frequently in the book of Proverbs is the contrast between anger, wrath, and strife on one hand, and peace, patience, and harmony on the other hand. The book warns against the dangers of being hot-tempered, quarrelsome, and violent, and encourages being slow to anger, gentle, and peaceful.

<sup>29</sup> Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

<sup>30</sup> A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. (14:29-30)

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

<sup>2</sup> The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. (15:1-2)

<sup>4</sup> A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (15:4)

<sup>18</sup> A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. (15:18)

<sup>32</sup> Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (16:32)

<sup>27</sup> Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

<sup>28</sup> Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent. (17:27-28)

<sup>11</sup> Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

<sup>12</sup> A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass. (19:11-12)

### ***Discerning the Source***

Another important theme is about the source and solution of anger, wrath and strife. These verses reveal that anger, wrath and strife are often caused by pride, envy, hatred or foolishness.

These verses will show that anger, wrath and strife are not only harmful to oneself and others, but also contrary to the wisdom and love of God. They also show that these sinful emotions can be avoided or overcome by humility, gentleness, forgiveness, self-control and peace.

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. (10:12)

By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom. (13:10)

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of wicked intentions is hated. (14:17)

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

A wrathful man stirs up discord, but one slow to anger calms strife. (15:18)

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city. (16:32)

A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. (18:6)

A gift given in secret soothes anger, and a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath. (21:14)

A stone is heavy and sand is weighty, but a fool's wrath is heavier than both of them. Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy? (27:3-4)

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## **Conclusion**

I want to close with three verses that have transformed my life.

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (15:1).

A wrathful man stirs up discord, but one slow to anger calms strife (15:18).

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit is better than he who takes a city (16:32).