

Handling Anger Correctly

Lakewood Family Church | Pastor Jonathan L. Vorce | March 8, 2026

Text: **Matthew 5:21-26** (KJV)

Introduction

- Today we open the Word together as we continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is not just giving rules—He is going straight to the heart.
- The Bible does not instruct us against being angry... It instructs us to *“Be angry and sin not...”* – **Ephesians 4:26** (Expound)

I. The Deadly Danger of Unchecked Anger (vv. 21-22)

A. Jesus lifts the Sixth Commandment from the hands to the heart.

1. Anger without a cause makes us guilty of the same judgment as murder.

B. Careless words (“Raca” = empty-headed; “Thou fool”)

1. Carry eternal consequences and expose a murderous spirit

C. The Bible instructs us that anger left alone is not a “small” sin.

1. It is the seed of destruction that must be uprooted before it bears fruit.

D. This truth is reinforced throughout Scripture:

- **1 John 3:15** (KJV) – *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”*
- **Ephesians 4:26-27** (KJV) – *“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.”*
- **James 1:19-20** (KJV) – *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”*

II. Action Steps When Feeling Anger Coming On

Anger itself is not sin. The goal is never to suppress it but to steward it under the Holy Spirit's control, so it doesn't lead to sin or broken relationships.

Here are practical, Scripture-based action steps to take the moment you feel anger rising. Practice them in order—they build on one another and create space for calm while keeping the path to resolution open.

1. Pause and Name It Before God (Immediate Stop)

The instant you feel your chest tighten, jaw clench, or temperature rise, stop everything. Say out loud or silently, *“Lord, I’m feeling anger right now.”*

Why it Works: **James 1:19** commands us to be *“quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.”* Naming it to God prevents it from controlling you and invites the Holy Spirit to intervene right away. This single pause often lowers the intensity within 10–15 seconds.

2. Pray a Short, Honest Prayer for Peace and Wisdom

Pray something simple like: *“Father, You see my anger. Give me Your peace that surpasses understanding (Philippians 4:7). Replace my wrath with Your gentleness and show me what You want me to do.”*

Why it Works: Prayer shifts your focus from the offense to the One who is greater than the offense. It activates the promise in **Psalms 34:18** that God is *“close to the brokenhearted”* and *“saves those who are crushed in spirit”*—including when the “crush” is anger.

3. Take 3–5 Slow, Deep Breaths While Repeating Truth

Breathe in slowly through your nose for four counts, hold for four, exhale for six. While breathing, quietly repeat a short verse such as:

- *“A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1)*
- *“In my anger I will not sin” (Ephesians 4:26)*
- *“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still” (Exodus 14:14)*

Why it Works: Your body's fight-or-flight response calms when oxygen increases and truth renews your mind (**Romans 12:2**). This keeps you from speaking or acting while adrenaline is highest.

4. Ask the Holy Spirit Two Diagnostic Questions

Silently ask:

- *“Is this anger righteous (protecting what honors God) or selfish (protecting my pride or rights)?”*
- *“What would love look like right now?” (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)*

Write or mentally note the honest answer.

Why it Works: This moves you from reaction to reflection, aligning your heart with God's will before you speak. It prevents the “foolish” escalation warned against in **Proverbs 14:17** and **29**.

5. Choose a Calm Response or a Time-Out

- If you can respond immediately with kindness, do so: *“I’m feeling angry right now and I want to honor God in how I handle this. Can we talk about it calmly?”*
- If you're still too heated, say, *“I need a few minutes to pray and calm down so I can listen well. Can we continue this in 15 minutes?”* Then physically remove yourself (walk outside, go to another room).

Why it Works: This honors **Ephesians 4:26** *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger”*—while preventing the enemy from gaining a foothold (**Ephesians 4:27**). It also models self-control to others.

6. Move Toward Resolution with Grace

Once calm, return (or call/text if needed) and follow this pattern:

- Listen first: *“Help me understand what happened from your side.”*
- Own your part: *“I felt angry because...”* (no blame-shifting).
- Offer forgiveness or ask for it: *“I choose to forgive you as Christ forgave me”* (**Ephesians 4:32**).
- Agree on next steps: *“How can we prevent this next time?”*

Why it Works: This follows **Matthew 5:23–24** and **Matthew 18:15**—addressing the issue quickly and humbly restores relationship and glorifies God.

7. Debrief with God Later (Even if It Went Well)

At the end of the day, thank God for any progress, confess any lingering sin, and ask Him to heal any root issues (unmet expectations, past hurts, triggers). Journal the verse that helped most.

Why it Works: This turns every anger episode into spiritual growth and prevents bitterness from taking root (**Hebrews 12:15**).

Special Notes:

- You are not alone in this. The same God who calmed the storm can calm your heart (**Mark 4:39**).
- Each time you choose these steps, you are being conformed to the image of Christ (**Romans 8:29**).
- Keep practicing—peace and resolution will become more natural as you walk in step with the Spirit.
- I’m praying for you right now that *“the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus”* (**Philippians 4:7**).

III. The Divine Priority of Reconciliation (vv. 23-24)

A. Even in the middle of worship—while your gift is on the altar—if you remember your brother has something against you, God says stop!

1. Reconciliation is more important than religious ritual.
2. Our vertical relationship with God is hindered until our horizontal relationships are right.

B. The Bible clearly instructs:

1. Leave the altar,
2. Go be reconciled, then return and worship
3. **Peace with people comes before praise to God**

C. This truth is reinforced throughout Scripture:

- **Matthew 6:14-15** (KJV) – *“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*
- **Ephesians 4:32** (KJV) – *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”*
- **2 Corinthians 5:18** (KJV) – *“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”*

IV. The Urgent Command to Make Peace (vv. 25-26)

A. *“Agree with thine adversary quickly”* while you still have the opportunity.

1. Delay only makes the prison door of controversy heavier.

B. Unresolved anger leads to judgment

1. The only way out is to settle the matter now and pay the *“uttermost farthing”* of humility and forgiveness.

C. The Bible instructs us that overcoming anger is not a feeling we wait for...

1. It is an act of obedience we choose today.

D. This truth is reinforced throughout Scripture:

- **Romans 12:18** (KJV) – *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”*

- **Hebrews 12:14** (KJV) – *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”*
- **Proverbs 16:7** (KJV) – *“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”*

Conclusion

- In this part of the Sermon on the Mount our Lord Jesus has shown us that:
 - Anger is murder in the heart,
 - Reconciliation is more sacred than sacrifice,
 - Peace is urgent because tomorrow may be too late.
- This is how the Bible tells us to overcome anger and make peace:
 - Recognize it as sin,
 - Repent quickly,
 - Reconcile quickly, and
 - Restore the relationship before worship or judgment comes.

Invitation to Prayer