

A Deadly Sin: Anger

Scripture Reading — James 1:12-27

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry. Ephesians 4:26 —

The Bible gives us permission to be angry. But it also suggests that anger can easily lead to sin--and we may not let that happen. Anger must be kept on a short leash.

Some anger is appropriate. I become angry if someone steals my car, hurts my child, or perverts justice. Like God himself, we grow angry at injustice, prejudice, and evil. But unlike God, our anger can quickly boil over and destroy relationships if we don't deal with it appropriately and eliminate it promptly.

For one thing, anger can build barriers between me and someone else. When I'm angry with someone, it's harder for me to be loving or fair or careful. So God counsels us to pay attention to the time limits he sets on anger and to deal with it by day's end. That means I may not just become angry with you; I need to talk with the person I'm angry with and, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), try to work things through.

In addition, anger is not just about my relationship with someone else; it's about me. When I allow anger to become my default response to irritation, when I hold a grudge or nurse resentment, when in my anger I push people away, then I need to examine myself in light of what God has said in his Word. Unchecked anger that turns to bitterness and an unforgiving spirit gets between God and me.

Prayer

Dear God, anger is a powerful but scary emotion. Please heal any wounds I may bear because of someone else's anger, and help me to root out wrongful anger in my heart. Amen.

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