

PROVERBS: THE WAY OF WISDOM

ANGER & PATIENCE

Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you. — Proverbs 20:22

Read: Proverbs 22:17-25 & 14:29

Several years ago, TIME Magazine published an article titled, "America's Anger Is Out of Control." The article itself wasn't groundbreaking. All of us already know this. However, the author, who isn't concerned in the least with helping us move toward biblical character, recognizes how the outrage in our moment is a problem. He writes, *"The easiest thing you'll do all day is get ticked off at something. Someone cuts ahead of you in traffic? Ticked off. Guy in front of you at Starbucks needs his entire order remade because his mocha half-cafe, double frap had the wrong frigging number of espresso shots in it even though you know full well nobody can taste the bloody difference? Exceedingly ticked off. We're all that way—and that's a problem. Anger is the lazy person's emotion. It's quick, it's binary, it's delicious. And more and more, we're gorging on it."* (Jeffery Kluger)

Anger is a challenging thing to deal with because we often feel justified in our anger. We somehow feel owed the right to express our frustrations as we please. Many Christians will even attempt to let themselves off the hook, citing the permissibility of "righteous anger." Never mind that our anger most often comes from our own sinful and twisted desires, expressed in our own sinful and twisted ways.

Over and over again, Proverbs calls us to counter our anger by cultivating an ongoing fear of the Lord. As our fear of the Lord increases, the more we see patience as the way of wisdom and peace. Patience requires a deep trust that God really does rule the world and his purposes really will prevail. Anger tends to show up in areas that you feel insecure, disrespected, or at-risk of losing something that makes you feel safe. The virtue of patience gives us an anchor of wisdom. It reminds us that we follow something—rather *Someone*—that is greater than our latest impulse. We can trust him.

Discussion/Reflection

We want to apply God's wisdom to transform how we think, feel, and act. The following questions are meant to stimulate conversation, correction, and change.

- 1. Patience may not immediately register to you as the way we resist our anger. However, think and discuss for a moment about the last time you were angry and how patience would have changed that situation.**
- 2. Think through a specific aspect of your life where you're currently angry, frustrated, or have the desire to write someone off.** What would it look like to cultivate patience in that situation, and what would be the first step to cultivating that?
- 3. Read Proverbs 16:5-6.** How do these verses encourage our trust in God toward the virtue of patience, and draw us out toward prayer for help?