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### Lighted Way Ministries

P.O. Box 742  
Canyonville, OR 97417  
[www.lightedway.org](http://www.lightedway.org)

## Christian Living Study Guide 4: “Overcoming Wrath”



# CONQUER ANGER

Learning to is a vital part of living a truly changed life by the grace of God. Christians are told in the Scriptures to put away all anger (see Ephesians 4:31). We are even warned against having close friendships with angry people, lest we become like them (see Proverbs 22:24-25).

*“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.” Psalm 37:8*

## 1. Why is overcoming a “bad temper” so vitally important?



**ANSWER:** Losing one’s temper can be a bit like a volcanic eruption. Internal pressure builds up until the hot “magma” of ungodly words and actions boil over in an emotional eruption which leaves friends, spouses, and children emotionally burned. Anger, like a volcano, cannot be managed, contained, or controlled. It must be conquered. And conquering anger is achieved through removing the causes of anger.

This may seem funny at first. “Yes, if you take away this or that behavior in my family members, which punch my buttons, of course I’ll stop being angry,” one might be thinking. But, anger is actually not caused by the people around us. It is a personal problem, for which we must each take full responsibility. Anger is a choice. It is a response which demonstrates a lack of understanding about “rights.” When our own internal causes for anger are removed, we will no longer have any “hot buttons” for anyone to push. Like Jesus, we will be able to respond with meekness to situations which would formerly have prompted a reaction like Mt. St. Helens.

## LESSON STUDY—4 continued

7) What are some ways we mistakenly take rights instead of responsibilities? Fill out the following table to answer (p 9):

LEGITIMATE RESPONSIBILITY	STOLEN RIGHTS

8) What steps can I take to fully yield “my” rights to God? (p 10)

- Identify \_\_\_\_\_ by looking for “hot spots”
- Confess the sin of \_\_\_\_\_
- Repent of this \_\_\_\_\_
- And yield them to God with no \_\_\_\_\_

9) What is meekness? How does having meekness prevent anger? (p 11)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10) What are wrong responses to irritations? (p 12) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11) What are the three steps to rightly responding to irritations?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

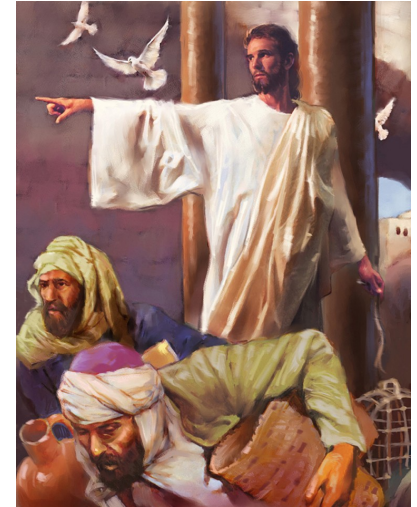
12) Follow the steps given on page 10, to yield your rights to God—and be forever free from Mt. St. Helens reactions.

## LESSON STUDY— 4

- 1) How is having a bad temper similar to a volcanic eruption? (p 2)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the difference between righteous indignation and ungodly wrath? (p 3)
  - Righteous indignation is characterized by: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Righteous indignation is in defense of: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ungodly anger is centered around: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ungodly anger is characterized by a: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) How does ungodly anger relate to unyielded rights? (p 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) How does Jesus demonstrate rightly yielding rights? (p 5-8) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Explain the spiritual realities behind ownership which help with yielding rights (p 8):
  - **I do not own any material possessions** — \_\_\_\_\_
  - **I do not own any money** — \_\_\_\_\_
  - **I do not own any talents** — \_\_\_\_\_
  - **I do not own time** — \_\_\_\_\_
  - **I do not own my own body** — \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Will recognizing these realities effect how you handle these above listed areas in the future?  
 Yes       No

## 2. What is the difference between righteous indignation and wrath?

**ANSWER:** Ungodly anger is centered around self and is characterized by a loss of self-control. Righteous indignation is in defense of the things of God, characterized by Spirit-control and vindication of holiness. Jesus never ceased to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, even when He cleansed the Temple and drove out the money-changers (John 2:13-17). His attitudes and actions never ceased to exhibit the Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). During righteous indignation, the Holy Spirit's rule in the heart continues.



In Bible times, a city's front-line of defense was its high, stone wall. The wall and strong gates kept evil out. Everyone within it could dwell in safety, so long as the wall remained sound. But, if a city was without walls, it was defenseless and became "easy pickings" for attackers. The Scriptures compare a person without control over his own spirit to a city without walls. So what is the "rule" which the Bible warns us to guard our spirits with in Proverbs 25:28? Rightly identifying the "rule" will aid us in discerning the difference between righteous indignation and ungodly wrath.

*Proverbs 25:28 "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."*

So, by what "rule" are we to govern our spirits? Some govern their spirits by the "rule" of what others are doing. One might be tempted to justify himself with the thought, "Hey, I don't have an anger problem! I certainly don't have a bad temper like Joe!" But, the Bible warns us that comparing ourselves with others isn't the "rule" with which to govern our spirits.

*2 Corinthians 10:12-13 "For we dare not... compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise... But according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us..."*

The rule with which we are to govern our spirits is God’s standard. This is why Jesus (Jesus), Who always conformed to this lovely Spirit-controlled Rule, could become “*angry and sin not*” (see Eph. 4:26 and John 2:13-17).

But, while righteous indignation isn’t about self at all, ungodly wrath is all about self. In fact, such anger is so closely linked to the unsundered “old man of sin” that one can use these temper flares or personal “hot buttons” to identify areas of unyielded rights.

### 3. How does wrath relate to unsundered rights?

**ANSWER:** Anger is like an alarm system, revealing areas where we feel our rights have been violated.

Think about the common triggers for ungodly wrath. Note how each is really centered around selfishness and unyielded personal rights:

- “I’m angry with you because you have disturbed my relaxation time.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to settle down in this soft chair, watch television, and have a cool drink undisturbed, after a hard day at work.)
- “I am upset with you for being ungrateful in how you speak and act toward me.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to be appreciated for fixing your meals, washing your clothes, etc...)
- “I’m mad that you have touched my personal items.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to privacy and to own things.)
- “I’m upset about you trying to tell me how to dress and what to listen to.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to dress in any way I want and to listen to whatever music I want.)
- “I’m angry that you didn’t buy that item I asked you for.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to be provided for and you owe these provisions to me.)
- “You spoke rudely to me and I am offended by it.” (Underlying belief: ***I HAVE THE RIGHT*** to be treated with respect.)

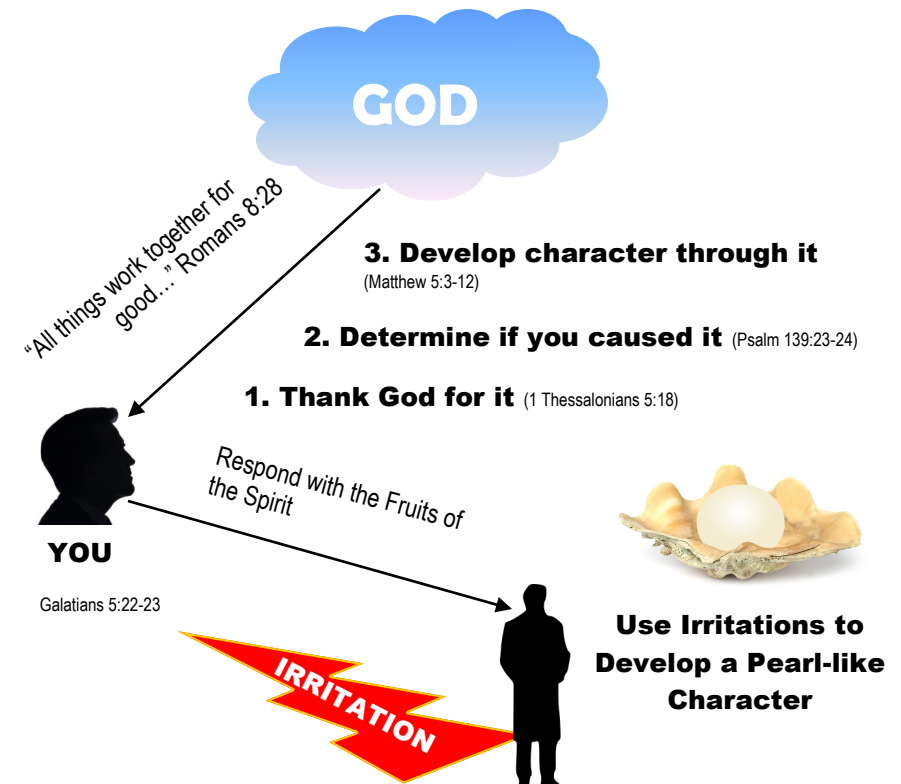


## 16. What are right responses to irritations?

**ANSWER:** Begin by thanking God for the irritation. This is hard to do, at first. But, thanking Him for the irritation demonstrates that He is bigger than this problem you are facing. He could take it away. He has promised to filter everything that comes to you by this wonderful shield:

*Romans 8:28* “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Therefore, if God has allowed this irritation to effect you, it is because He is going to bring some good out of it—like producing the lovely pearl, out of a grain of irritating sand. Knowing this, you will be able to thank God, even for the trials. And thanking God is just the first step. Follow all three steps shown in the following diagram:



Taking on Christ's yoke requires a yielding of my right to do as I please. I seek the wishes and commands of Jesus, my Leader.

## 14. How can I handle irritations without becoming angry or irritated?

**ANSWER:** After confessing and yielding your former “rights” and then daily bonding to the Saviour in being yoked with Him, the next step is to prayerfully learn to handle irritations with grace.

If ever there was a natural example of handling irritations with grace, it must be the oyster. The oyster has the amazing, Heaven-given ability to turn irritations into valuable pearls!



When a scratchy and irritating grain of sand gets inside the oyster's shell, it causes the soft-bodied animal discomfort and irritation. The oyster responds by secreting a special mucus coating over the grain of sand. Layer-by-layer, the coating covers the initial grain of sand, resulting in the creation of a lovely pearl. But, if the creature responded incorrectly to this stimulus, it would be like getting a grain of sand in your eye. Such responses would injure the animal, and certainly wouldn't produce the beautiful and precious pearl.

## 15. What are the wrong responses to irritations?

**ANSWER:** Trying to defend yourself, blaming someone else, or attempting to hold it in are all wrong responses to an irritation. Trying to defend yourself is not meekness. There is a proper place for answering questions. But, it is neither godly nor wise to try to defend yourself in the face of emotion. Blaming someone or holding the anger in are also both ineffective responses. And suppressed anger is dangerous. Eventually it erupts—like a volcano.

## 4. How can I follow the Saviour's Example and learn to never have ungodly wrath ever again?

**ANSWER:** Ungodly anger allows the wrathful spirit of the enemy to pour through you inflicting spiritual, emotional, and sometimes even physical wounds on others.

But, the devil possessed no “ground” in the Saviour's heart. This is because Jesus was completely submitted to the will of the Heavenly Father. He did not react in ungodly wrath because He had no unyielded rights!

In the Bible, we find that Jesus was always fully submitted to the Heavenly Father. He lived a life of total submission and perfect obedience, as an Example to all who follow Him (1 Peter 2:21).

*John 8:28-29* “Then said Jesus unto them... I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.”

*Luke 22:42* “Saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.”

The Scriptures also tell us that humble submission to God is the vital first step in gaining victory over temptation.

*James 4:6-7* “...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Let's examine the Saviour's level of yielded rights, in order to find a Pattern for yielding our own supposed rights point-by-point.



## 5. Jesus yielded His right to Wealth and Possessions.

Nothing this earth has to offer is to be compared with the glories of Heaven. And the Saviour willingly left this all behind that He might come to earth and live and die for us.

*1 Corinthians 2:9* “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”



The King of kings, Who owned all the silver and gold (Haggai 2:8) and every creature (Psalm 50:10), laid aside this great wealth and all the possessions which were rightfully His and didn't even claim the right to own a home, or a bed in which to sleep at night.

*Matthew 8:20* “And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His Head.”

## 6. Jesus yielded His right to a Good Reputation.

In Heaven, Christ is continually worshipped and honored. But, when He came to earth, He was despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53:3). He “made of Himself no reputation.”

*Philippians 2:5-7* “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

So submitted was Jesus' reputation, that even when His character was maligned, in lying testimony at His trial, He did not defend Himself.

## 13. How does living with meekness help prevent future angry flare-ups?

**ANSWER:** Meekness and ungodly anger are opposites. When a person is meek, he cannot be angry; when he is angry, he cannot be meek. As Bill Gothard explained in his booklet, *Principles of Ownership*, “Meekness is yielding all my personal rights and possessions to God, so He is free to accomplish His will in and through me,” (p 11)

**THE KEY TO MEEKNESS IS BEING SPIRITUALLY YOKED TO CHRIST.**

When two oxen are yoked together, they learn to work together as a team. The leader provides the direction and sets the pace. The second ox must yield its right to do as it pleases. While yoked together, every impulse and movement of the leader is immediately sensed by its partner, and because they are yoked together, the partner must respond quickly.

The longer the two oxen work together in a yoke, the more in-tune with one another they become. Soon the second ox comes to know and anticipate the responses of the leader. They learn to pull together and grow more and more productive in the process.



Jesus invites each person to learn meekness through being “yoked” together with Him.

*Matthew 11:28-30* “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I Am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

Being spiritually yoked with Christ means that we look to Him for guidance and direction. We stay in tune with His will by communing in a state of prayer throughout the day. We respond to stimuli with a Christ-like spirit.

## 12. Practically speaking, how do I yield “my rights” to God?

**ANSWER:** Identify your stolen rights by identifying “hot spots” or areas, which infringed upon, incur your anger. Then pray and specifically surrender these rights to God.

To begin, think back over the most recent times when you became angry. If you wish to be truly free of anger, you must not sugar-coat these temper outbursts nor justify them. Do not say, “I wasn’t really angry, I was only frustrated.” The Bible says that when we are fully walking under the unction of the Holy Spirit, we will always demonstrate God’s Fruit. One of these fruits is love. As the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:5, love never behaves itself unseemly (loses its temper). Love never seeks its own (is selfishly motivated). And love is not easily provoked (exasperated).

Identify moments of ungodly anger through these characteristic keys. Ask yourself, “Over what did I lose my temper? In which response was I selfishly motivated?” And, “under what circumstances did I become exasperated?”

Then pray for God to help you identify false rights you have claimed, which resulted in giving you “grounds” for ungodly anger.

Once you have prayerfully identified your unyielded rights, pray to God. Confess your sin of claiming these rights—stealing what is rightfully His Alone. Repent of this theft and surrender these “rights” to God, mentally placing them on His altar as you prayerfully name them one-by-one.

Areas of unyielded rights may include: self, dating/relationships, clothes, money, knowledge, music, activities/entertainment, future, health, reputation, and schedule. As you pray, picture yourself kneeling before God’s altar. Place these things upon it as you yield them with no strings attached.



## 7. Jesus yielded His right to be served.

Christ is the Creator of every living person. As such, He has the right to expect people to serve Him. He even has the supernatural power to impose His will on whomever He chooses. However, He chose to yield His rights and serve others instead of demanding their service to Him.

In the lifetime of Jesus, one of the most demeaning works of servitude was the washing of the dinner guests’ dirty feet. So lowly was this act of service, that the disciples were shocked when He stooped before them and began washing their feet.

*John 13:3-5 “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His Hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God...began to wash the disciples’ feet...”*



This same level of submitted service is to be demonstrated in the life of each follower of Christ.

*John 13:15-17 “For I have given you an Example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than He that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”*

## 8. Jesus yielded His right to be appreciated.

**Instead of appreciating the Saviour, the Pharisees hunted and harassed Him. Even His disciples didn’t thank or fully appreciate Him.** On the night of His greatest struggle, when He sweat drops of Blood in the Garden of Gethsemane and faced the second death for humanity, His disciples couldn’t even stay awake long enough to pray for Him! Yet, the Saviour persevered, and went to Cross, well aware that no one understood or appreciated what He was doing. He even cried out: *Luke 23:34 “...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”*

## 9. Jesus yielded His right to make His own decisions.

**One of the most basic “human rights” we all expect to be afforded is the right to make our own decisions about things. Yet, even this right was yielded by the Saviour.** What person doesn’t believe that they have a right to choose their own profession in life? What person doesn’t believe they have the right to decide whether to marry or not and to whom they should be married? Yet, even these basic assumed “rights” were laid aside by our Lord.

When Jesus was twelve years old, He understood His calling. He witnessed the slaying of the Passover lamb, and recognized His own destiny. Yet, even with this understanding, He expressed His desire to be about His Heavenly Father’s business (Luke 2:49).

During His ministry, Jesus made no decisions on His own. In everything He said or did, His attitude was always, “Not My will, but Thine be done.”

## 10. What reality must I understand in order to yield my rights?

**ANSWER:** Not only should every follower of Christ follow His lovely Example of full submission, but also, when we submit, we are finally acknowledging the truth. Jesus HAD rights to all the things He laid aside. WE DO NOT. Consider the following realities:

- **I do not own any material possessions**—I am a steward of what GOD owns (1 Peter 4:10).
- **I do not own any money**—I am the caretaker of God’s funds, which He has entrusted to me for use to His glory (Haggai 2:8).
- **I do not own any talents**—GOD has given me talents which are to be used to further His Kingdom (Matthew 25:14-29).
- **I do not own time**—even the ability to breathe is a gift from God, therefore all “my time” is really His (Job 27:3 and Genesis 2:7).
- **I do not own my own body**—My body is God’s Temple, and is to be cared for and used in a way that brings Him glory (1 Corinthians 6:19).

In actuality, an ungodly anger problem is really a stealing of God’s rights. God owns all, and I am His steward, or caretaker, of all that He has put in my possession. Failure to acknowledge this reality results in the temptation to be angry when “my” time, talents, reputation, resources, or position are infringed upon. Full submission to God demonstrates an awareness that I do not have rights. But, I do have responsibilities. It is important to understand the difference between rights and responsibilities.

## 11. What are legitimate responsibilities?

**ANSWER:** God has given each person responsibilities. These are right and fulfilling them brings honor to God. Responsibilities are very different from rights, but may cover the same territory.

- **CHILDREN HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO EXPRESS APPRECIATION AND THANKS TO THEIR PARENTS.** Does a mother have a right to expect her family to appreciate all she does for them? If even the Saviour didn’t claim the right to command humanity’s thanks and appreciation, neither may His followers. But, while a mother may not demand thankfulness, as her right, **expressing thankfulness IS the children’s responsibility** (2 Timothy 3:1-2).
- **CHILDREN HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK RESPECTFULLY AND WITH HONOR TO THEIR PARENTS.** Does a child have the right to express his or her opinion? No. The Scriptures warn us to be “swift to hear” and “slow to speak,” (James 1:19, Eph. 6:1-3).
- **A PARENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TRAIN THEIR CHILDREN TO HONOR AND RESPECT THEIR ELDERS.** Does a parent have the right to become angry when he or she is not honored and respected? No! But, without anger, and in righteousness, parents are to “train up” their children teaching them respect, obedience, and honor (Proverbs 22:6).
- **PARENTS HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KNOW WHAT THEIR TEENAGERS ARE DOING AND WHO THEY ARE WITH.** The term “right of privacy” is being used today to allow teenagers to make immoral decisions without the knowledge or consent of their parents. Scripture grants no such immunity. In fact, God warns that whatever is done in secret will be exposed openly (Luke 8:17). By claiming a supposed “right” to privacy, a teenager not only fails to fulfill his or her responsibility to his parents, he also hinders them from fulfilling their Scriptural responsibility to him. The family has a responsibility to provide modesty, propriety, and respect (which are not to be confused with privacy).