

How to Keep Your Cool

[Originally from Youth Magazine – January 1986 – this copy edited by
the Bible Fund editors, July 2022]

Instructions: The format of these mini-studies is similar to that of the Bible On-Line Study Course. Look up and read in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions further explain the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

Has “losing your cool” ever gotten you into trouble? Have you ever become angry, perhaps at an insult or threat, and then said things you regretted later?

Losing your temper can be the cause of fights, accidental injuries and destroyed relationships that could be impossible to restore.

In this study, you'll discover vital tips from the Bible about how to successfully deal with anger. Applying them will improve your ability to get along with others and help you develop lasting friendships.

Be sure to get your Bible, a pen or pencil and some paper. Reading and writing out the scriptures that answer the questions asked will help you remember the important principles you'll be learning.

1. Let's first learn something about God's character. Is God slow to anger, full of compassion and mercy? Psalms 103:8; Joel 2:13; Nahum 1:3. What causes God to become angry? Psalm 7:11; Romans 1:18. But does He stay angry forever? Psalms 103:9; 30:5; Micah 7:18.

One reason God is slower to anger is that He has great understanding. He realizes that we are not perfect and is therefore compassionate and merciful toward us.

God does, however, get angry at sin because of its harmful effects. God punishes in love so people will quit doing the things that cause their problems. If God became angry quickly, no one would live long enough to achieve His wonderful purpose for our lives.

2. What kind of character does God want us to be building? Matthew 5:48. Are there important reasons God wants us to learn to control our emotions, especially anger? Proverbs 14:7; 19:19; 29:22.

God, who has given each of us a full range of emotions and the ability to express them, wants us to lead happy and successful lives (John 10:10; 3 John 2). He wants us to become more like Him in every way.

One thing God especially wants us to learn to control is anger. Not only can anger lead to hurt friendships, rash words and actions; it can also lead to hatred, hostility and even murder.

A person who is hot tempered seems to always be fighting and getting into trouble. He has few friends and many enemies. He says and does many foolish things that he may regret the rest of his life.

3. Did Christ say that anger could be a crime as bad as murder? Matthew 5:21-24.

Because we often do what we've been thinking about, uncontrolled anger, under certain circumstances, can lead to murder! An example of this was when Cain, the oldest son of Adam and Eve, became the first murderer when he allowed his anger toward Abel, his brother, to get out of control (Genesis 4:3-8). But God considers even the hateful thought a sin.

4. What did Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 3:11-12), tell us about keeping our temper? Proverbs 14:29; 16:32; 19:11.

The person who is slow to anger shows great understanding. He does not jump to conclusions, saying the first thing that comes to mind. He keeps in control, considers the facts and realizes that his first impression may be wrong.

5. Can hostile words stir up anger and worsen a tense situation? Proverbs 15:1.

Anger is often inflamed by the words we may say when provoked: "Who do you think you are - you can't treat me like that!"

Instead of making a hasty statement like that, try to see the situation from the other person's viewpoint. Try to keep calm while doing so. See if you can find a reason for the person's actions and think of ways to deal with it: "Maybe he's having a rough day" or "she must be very unhappy or else she wouldn't do such a thing."

Sometimes the best thing to do about anger is nothing. Ignore the insult, and it will often turn out to be unimportant and quickly forgotten. Keeping quiet also gives us time to cool down and decide if the matter is worth discussing.

6. Should we strive to overlook the offenses of others and be quick to forgive mistakes? Romans 12:17; Ephesians 4:31-32; Matthew 6:14-15.

What we might have thought was a deliberate attempt to offend us might have been just a simple mistake. Our friends generally don't intend to hurt us. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Overlooking offenses will smooth our relations with others and will help us have greater peace of mind.

7. Will God, in due time, repay those who hurt us – who try to get us angry? Romans 12:19. How should we treat even our enemies? Romans 12:20-21; Matthew 5:44-45

Sometimes it is hard to do this, especially when someone has done something bad to us on purpose. But God still wants us to be willing to forgive him or her. Resist the temptation to get angry and repay the person in some way. Ask God for the help you may need to control your

attitude so you can treat your enemies kindly. In so doing, you will not react in the way they expect, and in time you might even gain a friend.

8. When we do become angry, should we be sure that it does not cause us to break God's law? Ephesians 4:26.

There are certain things we should become angry about. God hates sin because of the evil it causes, and so should we. But we must be careful not to allow such anger to cause us to be hateful or hurt others for their wrongdoing. Remember that God will repay the person in His due time and His own way.

9. How fast should we get over angry feelings? Look at Ephesians 4:26 again.

We should never allow anger to fester or boil, going to bed smoldering with pent-up rage over things that have happened during the day. If you are angry with your parents, a brother or sister, do your best to solve the problem before going to bed. If you are upset with a friend, a quick, peacemaking telephone call might help the situation.

Going to bed with a calm, tranquil mind is a wonderful experience, and helps us enjoy a good night's sleep.

10. Are there many health benefits that can come to us from controlling our emotions? Proverbs 14:30; 11:17; 17:22.

Emotions often directly affect and cause certain physical symptoms. Negative emotions such as anger or resentment can cause many ills, including headaches, ulcers and heart attacks.

A relaxed attitude, free of resentment, dissatisfaction or anger, helps us enjoy a longer, healthier life.

11. Is it important that we do our best to stay away from those who are often angry and involved with contention? Proverbs 17:14; 22:24. Why? Proverbs 22:25.

Solomon warned us to avoid angry people – not to keep company with them if possible. We are influenced by our friends more than we may realize, and there is a good chance their anger will rub off on us.

12. For many, feelings of anger are a deep-rooted habit, extremely difficult to overcome. But has God promised to give us the wisdom and strength we need to overcome this bad habit, as well as any others we may have? James 1:5-6; Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

You may think it is impossible to overcome a quick temper or feelings of anger and hostility. But with God's help, all things are possible. So, ask Him for that help – for the ability to keep your cool under trying circumstances, to overlook the offenses that others may give you! You will enjoy a much happier and rewarding life when you do!