

What is God Like?

03 / Slow to Anger

The LORD passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, **slow** to **anger**, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..." (Exo 34:6)

Some may be surprised to hear that. Isn't God *quick* to anger, maybe even anxious to strike people down for their sins?

Anger is often associated with heat or kindling a fire in the Bible.

- Potiphar's "**anger** was kindled" when his wife falsely accused Joseph (Gen 39:19)
- "Eliab's anger was **kindled**" when his little brother David showed up on the battlefield (1 Sam 17:28)
- Rebekah encouraged her youngest son Jacob to flee to his uncle "and stay with him a while, until your brother's **fury** turns away" (Gen 27:44)



Heat can be a very good thing. There's nothing wrong with kindling a fire in the right setting, and this is why passages like Proverbs 14:29, 15:18, 16:32, and 19:11 describe the wisdom behind being "slow to anger."

This is exactly what we are called to in James 1:19.

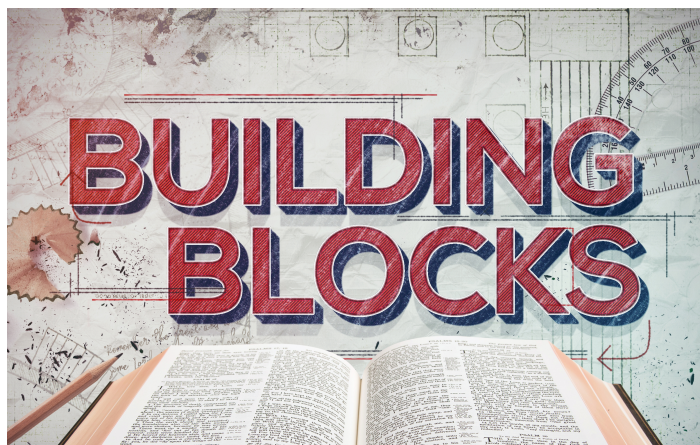
Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to **hear**, slow to speak, slow to anger...

...and notice the reason provided:

...for the anger of man does not produce the **righteousness** of God. (1:20)

Does God's anger "**burn**" at times? Yes it does, as an expression of his righteousness, justice, and love for the world. But we need to remind ourselves every once in a while how **patient** God is and has been for thousands of years. "For he makes **his** sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

What is God like? God is **slow to anger**.



For Class & Family Discussion:

- How does "good sense" (Prov 19:11) and "great understanding" (14:29) relate to being "slow to anger"?
- Jonah is a great case study. Jonah 3 ends with news of Nineveh's repentance. But how did Jonah feel about it in 4:1? What was he afraid of all along (4:2)? And what basic question did God ask (4:4)? What can we learn from it all?
- Is there any sense in which God's wrath is "good" news?
- How does Romans 5:6-11 help us understand just how far our "merciful" and "gracious" God has been willing to go to save us?
- How do passages like Romans 2:1-4 and 2 Peter 3:8-10 help us understand the foundational truth that our God is "slow to anger"?
- What might it look like in your own life this week to "be angry" and "not sin," not giving the devil an "opportunity" (Eph 4:26-27)?