

# Is It Right for You to Be Angry?

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of overcoming anger and cultivating a heart of compassion and pity, as seen in the story of Jonah and the city of Nineveh.*

**Duration:** 34:57

**Scripture:** Jonah 4:1

**Topics:** "Anger Management", "Compassion and Mercy"

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## Description

Shane Idleman explores the story of Jonah in chapter 4, emphasizing Jonah's anger towards God's mercy for Nineveh after he preached repentance. Jonah's displeasure reveals a common struggle with anger, especially when it comes to God's grace towards others that we may not feel they deserve. The sermon challenges listeners to reflect on their own anger and how it can hinder their relationship with God and others, urging them to replace anger with compassion and intercession. Idleman highlights the toxic nature of anger and encourages a heart transformation through the Holy Spirit to foster love and understanding instead.

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## Transcript

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Jonah chapter 4. Jonah chapter 4, and most of you know the story of Jonah, right? We've been going through it a little by little, and Jonah was called of God to go and deliver a message to Nineveh to preach repentance. And he got swallowed by the fish, the fish brought him back, got him back on track, and Jonah found out that God was going to spare the city, and he wasn't too happy with that. So we'll pick up in Jonah 4 if you have a Bible, verse 1, but it displeased Jonah exceedingly.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. What displeased him? That God was going to honor his preaching and bring Nineveh to repentance. So Jonah was upset, he became angry.

So he prayed to the Lord and said, ah, Lord, what are you doing? Was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish, for I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in love and kindness, one who relents from doing harm. Therefore, now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live. Then the Lord said, is it right for you to be angry? And that's really the title of the message tonight.

Is it right for you to be angry? Has anyone, did anyone come in tonight angry at anything? Come on, Wednesday night's the honest group, right? How many times we come in angry at things and upset at the

way our circumstances are. And what happened here is he didn't want the assignment that God gave him. God said, go to Nineveh.

He went to Nineveh. He preached for 40 days. And when he was done preaching, the city responded.

They repented. And he got upset. He said, this is why I didn't want to go.

Can you imagine telling God that? This is why I didn't want to go, because I knew you were a graceful and a merciful God, slow to anger, abundant in love and kindness. So Jonah had an anger problem. Like many of us here in this room, sometimes in our past, maybe even right now.

But let's ask a few questions. What displeased Jonah? What upset Jonah? Well, God's grace and God's mercy upset Jonah. That's what he got upset at.

He didn't like that God was being gracious and merciful to the people. He also fled because he was angry. We often miss God's will when we're angry.

That really stood out to me this week. God said, go to this city, preach repentance. And that angered Jonah.

And his anger, he responded negatively to God. And that will throw you off course more times than anything else probably, getting angry, not wanting to do something that God has called us to do. It's especially big in the church when we're called to go and be united.

And to go and foster unity. Maybe go ask for forgiveness. Or maybe go fix a relationship that's broken.

And we allow that anger to keep us from doing what God wants us to do. So the question I want to throw out there tonight, is there anyone tonight not doing God's will because of anger? You're angry at something, angry at what God's called you to do, what you know, because we know we need to do it, right? That's what angers us. I know I need to do this.

But I'm not going to do it, Lord. I don't want to do it. And we get angry.

And then from that angry, we shift and we go outside of God's will. He basically said, take my life. I give up.

Anger makes you want to quit. Have you noticed that? When you're filled with joy and excited about the things of God, you can get through any mountain, or over any mountain, right? Through any valley. Any obstacles come my way.

Negative emails, problems come my way that day. But you get angry and upset. I just want to quit.

I just want to give up. So anger is a very dangerous emotion. Is it right for you to be angry? God asks this question.

So it begs the same question to us today for consideration. Is it right when God saves or rescues others? Do you know anybody that God is rescuing or saving and you're angry, you're upset? I wish God would have judged them. Oh, come on.

Just a little bit. I felt that way before, right? I wish God would judge them, that he would teach them a lesson. So we don't like sometimes when God rescues somebody or when he's pouring, it appears to be

blessings on them, and we're upset.

We're angry at them. And why is God blessing them? And anger then, now it's shifting off of affecting them, but now it's affecting you and your heart. You're out of God's will.

You're not joy-filled. And it will begin to ruin and tarnish that relationship you have with God. Is it right when God heals somebody? And maybe not you.

Have you ever seen somebody get healed of the same thing or delivered or set free and you get angry? So many people, here's an example, they're trying, they're getting through, but an addiction keeps tripping them up. But they've seen somebody else go, praise God, last week I was delivered. What about me? What about me? And here comes the anger.

See, the enemy will use that anger. Anger is one of the biggest tools he has. That's what hurts families.

That's what shatters lives of little children and kids and our spouses. Lashing out in anger. Because what's hard, what you have to remember is when those words go out or when that anger goes out, you can't just retract that.

We can say I'm sorry, but the damage has already been done. It's like knocking down a house with a big bulldozer. I'm sorry I did that, but the damage is still done.

So we have to be careful. Angry outbursts. The King James says, anger worketh not the righteousness of God.

We never get anything right through anger. Is it right when God blesses someone and we get angry? Have you seen this before? Finances, especially. God's blessing them.

Why, Lord, why are you blessing them? Why are things going good? Why are their children doing good and mine aren't? Especially in the teenage years, this can be, why are they walking with the Lord and my kids aren't? Lord, I'm angry. See how jealousy comes in and bitter? See how destructive anger is? I mean, it can weave in there and it can pollute your spirit. Because out of an angry heart doesn't come much good.

We go to church angry. Have you ever worshipped angry? Right? Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

A thousand, a billion, what's that, a billion stars or whatever? And they're just angry. It affects, you don't want to read the Bible, that's for sure. It affects everything.

So the encouragement tonight is to get rid of anger. To leave it here. Myself included.

There are people that I know that you know, they don't go here, but it's just angry how, why isn't God judging them yet? You know, they hurt us. Or they hurt others. Or they've got a pattern of lying.

Or they've got a pattern of this or that. Why is God allowing this? And instead of saying, Lord, you're the judge, you know, let me pray for them. When you start to pray for them, it really shifts.

It's hard at first, but you begin to pray for them and your anger shifts to compassion. It's interesting how it flips once you allow God to work in your heart. Is it right when God blesses other ministries or promotes others in ministry and we get angry? Have you ever seen anybody at church get promoted? Or get started

in something or get something from the church or get recognized and we get angry? What about me? What about little old me? Is it right to get angry? That question still goes out today.

How we act when others are blessed or spared from God's judgment reveals a true condition of our heart. Can you truly rejoice when somebody is blessed? Can we truly rejoice in that? There's an interesting book out by Don Colbert. Many of you know who that is.

He's a Christian doctor. He's written a lot of books. Toxic Relief and different things.

But he has an interesting title. It's called Deadly Emotions. And it's interesting.

Anger is toxic to the heart. Your risk of having a stroke is three times greater two hours after an angry outburst. Anger begins to release toxic emotions.

You can go on psychology websites, on secular websites. This is common knowledge now. The Bible talked about it before.

Anger rotting the bones. Anger causing destruction. Anger damaging the spirit, damaging something.

But we know that the immune system is compromised. The body. Because when there's anger, your body is in fight or flight.

It's almost like God designed us. Okay, here comes a lion. Right? I'm getting angry or I'm getting scared.

And that fight or flight comes in. The adrenaline comes in. These hormones that are good for that season to fight a lion or to run are good.

But if you hold on to that anger at home and you're going to blow your top, you yell at a spouse or kids and it's just a constant anger. It's like walking, living with a volcano that's about ready to erupt at any moment. And if those anger emotions keep absorbing into your heart, into your life every day, it's very toxic on the body.

It's hard because you weren't designed to be in that constant state of anger and fear and trepidation and being upset. You can tell a difference, right? That's where that term, my blood boils, comes from. You can feel that blood boiling.

A lot of times it's directly related to our pride. The more humble a person is, the less angry and upset they get. Now, this is coming from somebody who hasn't mastered humility, right? But I can tell from 10 years ago, things that used to bother me, I mean, and angry and mean and you just kind of learn to go with it.

But it's still there. It's still ready to knock on the door, right? What challenges our pride, what upsets us. Other people getting promoted or healed or set free or finances, they're going, oh, you hear people, I got \$3,000 back on my taxes.

I didn't get anything. Right? It's that time of year. And do you get happy for them? Come on, right? Like, what's wrong with me? What's going on? And you feel that and you hold that in.

It's interesting, the CDC, you know what that is, right? The Center for Disease Control, I think is the exact wording on it. But they would say that 85% of disease is linked to our toxic emotions. There's something that happens in the body.

It's not healthy, right? Any emotion, it's interesting. Love, forgiveness. When the Bible says, let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, unforgiveness, let all that be put away from you and be tenderhearted and malice and not be malice and kind.

And when you do that, there's something that changes in your body. There's books written now on, it's called neuroplasticity, watching the brain reprogram itself and release things that are healthy and good for the body. So these joy and peace and love, what they do to the body compared to anger and jealousy destroy the body.

God knows what he's doing. I believe it's because of anger, jealousy, all that's part of the curse. Those are wrong toxic emotions, so they will affect us in all areas of life.

So be careful in this area of anger. Verse 5, so Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. You know, let me stop there for a minute.

I just said something, be careful in this area of anger. Don't I mean, yeah, easy to say, right? Hard to do, but let me encourage you. Anger, anger can't really find a place in a heart that's broken before God and says, Lord, I need help in this area.

I really wish my dad would have prayed that because he was a very angry man in construction and anger and throwing things. You've ever had TV controls thrown at you and dinner and chairs and, you know, and angry outbursts? And I've lived in that home, you know, where it's like you're walking on eggshells and what's the next thing to fly off the handle? But you can ask God to help you. If you acknowledge it, if you say, Lord, I have a problem in this area, I need help.

Would you help me, Holy Spirit? Come and allow me to be softer and gentler. Give me the words to speak. And as you submit to that work of the Holy Spirit, God can begin to replace that and you'll go, there's a week or two will go by and you're like, I haven't been upset.

I haven't got angry at traffic or different things. And you can ask God to help change that. But willpower alone, that's like going, I'm not going to get angry.

I'm not going to get angry. And you're just ready to explode. Because it's not a willpower thing.

This isn't the will under power. This is the Holy Spirit bringing in the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace and gentleness and kindness.

Because it's hard for the fruit of the Spirit to exist and also the fruit of the flesh. One or the other prevails. They cancel out the other one.

You notice that, right? Have you ever get angry and upset and irritated? Is the fruit of the Spirit flourishing and growing on the tree? So be encouraged in that. You can't just hope it goes away or grin and bear it. It's got to be something that God does in the heart.

The heart actually changes. You begin to pray for people you used to get upset at. You begin to have hope where there used to be no hope.

You begin to say, well, you know what, Lord, you're not blessing me in that area. But look at all, I mean, if we thought, have you ever thought and started writing down everything you're thankful for? I've done it before. You can just keep going and going.

If you focus on the things you should be thankful for and ignore the things that maybe are making you angry, that will outweigh the anger you're feeling and you'll begin to feel that peace again. So Jonah went out of the city. He's still mad.

He went on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and set under it in the shade till he might see what would become of the city. So they repented as preaching.

He got upset that they repented. Then he was going to go sit up on a mountain and watch the city and see if God was going to rain down fire and brimstone on, like he did Sodom and Gomorrah. So he's waiting to see if God would really be merciful.

So he's still upset. He's still mad. He says, okay, I'm going to see God.

I'm going to see if God destroys this place. So there he made himself a shelter. He set under it.

There's shade. And he wanted to see what was going to happen with the city. And verse 6, the Lord God appeared, actually God prepared a plant and made it come over Jonah.

So you have this thought of Jonah sitting here in the sun, hot sun. Go to that area in the summer if that's when this was. And it's scorching hot.

And this plant came up and formed and covered Jonah and offered Jonah shade, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. So he's grateful for the plant, but still upset at the God's heart for the city.

And again, he wasn't ready to repent. He's saying, let's see what happens. And it's interesting, God in his grace worked through the wrong heart of Jonah.

See, it's interesting. Jonah, I believe, was Jonah was actually preaching repentance with the wrong heart. He didn't have a genuine concern for the people.

Guys, would you just repent? None of that. He came wanting God to judge him. And God still worked through his grace, through the wrong heart of the messenger, because God's word is so powerful, it will bypass the heart even if the word is that strong.

It will bypass the messenger. God says, okay, get out of the way, Jonah. I don't need you.

My word is strong enough. So the city heard, what? Repent? Or in 40 days, God is going to judge our city? We need to repent. And they turned to God, and Jonah got upset.

And then verse 7, but as morning dawned, the next day God prepared a worm. And so, I guess it was a big worm. It came and ate the plant, damaged the plant, and so it damaged the plant, and the plant withered.

And it happened when the sun arose, that God prepared a terrible east wind, a violent east wind. And the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, it is better for me to die than to live.

Boy, oh boy. This poor guy. You think of this strong preacher guy, right? Preaching repentance in the belly of a fish.

But he's a little crybaby. He's upset here. But we can also glean from this, and I know this to be true, that God often uses difficulties to teach us our own lessons.

Because we often don't learn just by telling us, do we? Like you can, how many of you do you tell your kids something? Yes, mom. Yes, dad. I know, that sounds great.

But unless they experience life, unless life takes you in, chews you up and spits you out, then you're not going to have a different opinion. Right? Kids, they want all this freedom. I can't wait to get out of the house.

I can't wait to have all this freedom. Talk to them 10 years later. What happened? God uses difficulties to teach us.

So is there anything he's trying to teach you during this season, during this week? Any difficulty, any challenge that where he's trying to bring out that anger, you're angry at something, and he'll reverse, and he'll bring in difficult situations, difficult people, difficult things at work, difficult family environments he might allow in order for us to see our heart and where we're at. Because without that, we often don't see our error, do we? When things are going good, there's no difficulties, we don't have a tendency to look within. But when the difficulties hit, that makes us look within.

So if you're having relational conflicts, like Jonah was, is there anybody here, relational conflicts? Look within first. Am I adding to this? Am I causing some of this? Am I the problem on this one? Doesn't mean the person is completely right, but also we have to take sometimes some responsibility in these relational fractures. Then God said to Jonah, is it right for you to be angry about the plant? And he said, it is right for me to be angry, even to death.

But the Lord said, you have pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up at night and perished in the night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which are more than 120,000 persons, who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and much livestock. Not discerning between the right hand and the left hand is just a statement meaning, this is an ignorant people.

Jonah, they don't have the law. They don't know about Yahweh. They don't know the Old Testament scrolls.

They don't know the teaching of Moses. This is a people in a place destined for hell unless I intervene. Their children, their families, their spouses, they don't know the right hand from their left.

They're ignorant people. And I intervened. Should not my grace intervene and go and reach out and save these people? How much more of these people than a plant? And the word that stood out this week was pity.

Should I not pity them? The word pity means the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and the misfortunes of others. We should have pity. That's one aspect that is lost.

We've lost that in the church today, haven't we? We don't have that pity or that compassion. We look at the persecuted church. We look at what's going on in different countries.

We look even in our own backyard and we've lost that pity and that compassion. Getting that back will help you refocus maybe what God's called you to. Maybe a certain ministry or getting back on track.

Having that heart of compassion, that pity, because then out of that you begin to move and follow the heart of God. Do you do anything if you don't have pity for somebody or compassion? Usually something is done because of compassion and pity. We have pity on what affects us.

God wants us to have pity on what affects others. See, when it's happening to me, I have great pity, right? If I'm sore or I'm hurt, I've got a sickness or I'm going through something, I have great pity. Why don't you have pity for me? Why don't you have compassion for me because it's hurting me? God wants us to take that same attitude and have it for others.

Again, this can't be worked up. This can't be willpower alone. Okay, I'm going to try to have pity tomorrow, Shane.

I'm going to really try hard. It has to be a work of God in your heart, changing your heart, softening your heart. The first step is admitting I have a pity problem.

That's catchy. God, I have a pity problem. I don't pity.

I don't have compassion. Can you help me in that area? Give me a heart. What will happen is he'll begin to, during worship and prayer, he'll begin to bring up things and show you things and your heart will begin to break for other people groups.

Your heart will begin to break for your neighbors who don't know you. The teenage kid down the street who used to drive you crazy, driving fast, you'll begin to have pity and compassion because his parents are never home. They're going through a divorce and your heart will begin to break for people instead of being angry.

So you can't have compassion and pity on people when you're angry at them. Anger has to be removed so pity can come in. Most of the people that we are angry at need to have our compassion, don't they? We need to have compassion for what they're going through.

We need to have compassion for what God is maybe allowing in their life and showing us. And I think it was Oswald Chambers, I don't remember the exact word, it's in his devotional book, My Utmost for His Highest. He said that God often reveals things to us about others not for criticism but for intercession.

So we'll see flaws in people. We'll see things that are happening but not so we can criticize them but so that we can intercede on their behalf and pray for them. So when God reveals the flaws or faults in others or we get angry or upset, it's not so that we can sit and have our own pity party and be disgruntled, it's so that we can start to intercede and pray for them.

Many people need our prayers a lot more than our anger, a lot more than our attitude. So let's work on that tonight. Pray for those struggling through the issues that I'm going to list in just a minute.

Do you know, are there family members or friends? Because I know people in all these areas that are having a hard time right now with their health. They're struggling with their health and instead of having pity and compassion, we might have a judgmental spirit or an angry spirit. Oh yeah, God, you go show them.

Or we just don't lack compassion. Take some time and go to the hospital homes one day. That'll jumpstart your pity and your compassion and your heart.

I think a lot of people, I wish everybody in this church would at least go to the hospital homes once or twice a year, every quarter, just to visit the patients and get that heart of compassion back. But is there anybody you know right now, the health issues that you need to pray for instead of criticize, that we need to encourage instead of push down? We need to pray for them instead of hold in anger. What about somebody, what about their financial state? Do you know anybody that's going through a very difficult financial state? Instead of saying, oh, I told you, I told you that was a bad decision, or you're angry about something.

Instead, pray for them. Because see, when you start to pray for them, it changes you. When you pray for them, it opens up your own heart.

Do you know people with marriage problems that need our prayers? And it's sad because in the church we're often like this, aren't we? I told you, I told you, you guys, and it's this. Instead of this, God help them. God, remove my pride, remove my anger, remove my judgmental spirit, and Lord, you bless that marriage.

Bring them back together and we humble ourselves and we pray for these people. What about families right now that are having problems with their kids? Whether it's young kids, older kids, and we sit in the scorner seat, we sit in the judgment seat, and say, well, look how I raised my kids. They don't do that.

Look at you, you should do this, you should do this. Instead of this, getting that heart of prayer. Or family problems right now where we're angry at family members.

You know that's very common in the church. That's one thing that shocked me, pastoring, is how many people are angry at fellow believers, family members. I'm not going to talk to my mother, or my brother, or my sister, or my aunt, and there's so much anger and hatred in the families.

In church, in Christians, I'm not talking about the world. We know that. I know things are difficult.

I know, trust me. We're not called to be doormats and just get walked over all the time. But we should, of all people, have the heart of compassion.

So is there family relationships right now tonight that you're angry at? I feel God's strongly impressing me in these four areas this week. We've been sitting in the seat of the scornful. We've been sitting in the seat of judge and jury and not intercessor.

We haven't been interceding for them. You know that, right? You start to pick apart people. Why aren't they at church more? I do that.

I'm guilty of that one quite often. They just need to be at church more. Why aren't they there? I knew that would happen.

I could have told you that a year ago, right? But God says, listen, you know things. I've revealed things. Can you intercede for them? Because as I start to do that, my heart changes.

My priorities change. My passion changes. And I begin to remove anger and bitterness out of the way, allowing the filling of the Holy Spirit to come forth and to seek God again with a renewed passion.

Because anger and these attitudes will hinder your walk with God every day. I've seen it all the time. It hinders our walk with the Lord.

It does not help. So here's a closing thought. Is it right for you to be angry? Is it right for you to be angry? No, it's not unless it's righteous indignation, right? Righteous anger over what's happening to our nation.

Anger, what's happening to the church. Anger, the opiate addictions and the suicides and those kind of righteous angers. But I'm talking about unfounded anger tonight.

Did we come in here with anger? Some of you, some of you may have been holding on to anger for years. Anger for years. I know people that are angry at their dad.

So angry at their dad and he's dead and buried. Anger at spouses. When you go through a divorce, is it any anger there? There's a lot of anger there.

Fights, misbehaving. The kid's misbehaving and there's anger. So I just think it's a time to get our hearts right and if there is anger in our hearts.

Anger, I'm going to do self-examination myself during worship and just say, Lord, if there's anything in here that's not pleasing, if I'm angry at somebody, Lord, would you just clean that out tonight? I want to leave here with a fresh start, a right heart. Let all bitterness and anger and clamor. Clamor is a noisy kind of obstruction that's just, you're clamorous.

You're angry, upset. Paul says remove all those things from you, from your heart and be tender hearted, gentle, loving, forgiving. See, there's a choice in there.

Sometimes we think there's no choice. Right? We think, well, if God wants it, he'll do it. If God wants me to be loving, if God wants it, he'll do it.

He has permission. He can do whatever he wants. He's God.

You will stay like that until you die because the Bible says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Put away this kind of wrong thinking. When it's all said and done, meditate on these things that are right and noble and honest.

Put away from you bitterness and anger. That means there's a decision that this is not right. There's a decision that I'm going down this wrong path.

I need to change gears. God, would you help me? There has to be full repentance, bringing it to the light and confessing it before God. Don't allow that toxic emotion, toxic emotion to harm you anymore.

I forget who said it and I think it's anger or jealousy or something like that. Let's just use it for anger. Anger, something like, is the only poison that you give to another, something you think you're giving to another, but you're actually the one drinking it.

It's the only thing that actually comes back and affects you. Many people don't know how angry we are at them, do they? Because what do we do? We're angry in silence. Then when it blows up and you finally talk to them like, I had no idea.

You can go months and years with all this anger, all this frustration, all this hurt, just eating at you and they are on their way on a cruise to Hawaii and they might hit Alaska and they have no idea that you're holding all that in. It's not harming them, it's harming you. So the Bible says release that.

Is it right to be angry? And when you release it, there's tremendous freedom like a dam that's been dammed up, welled up. Emotions, you can well up emotions. They just well up like a dam that's ready to burst.

I've got all this water behind it and this dam has just burst. And the emotions can be released and there's a feeling of a sense of freedom. Like you're carrying around a 50 pound backpack and it's gone and you've just released it.

Doesn't mean the other person was right. That's why we get upset. We think, well if I do that, that means they're right.

No, they're still wrong but you're releasing that toxic hold that you have on them. And as you release that, your emotional health is restored, your spiritual health is restored and your physical health is improved. I mean I truly believe, my dad, I think among bad eating and different things, I think anger put him in the grave with a heart attack at 54.

And it's so much anger and especially as believers, as Christians, we have to give that to Christ. We have to ask the Holy Spirit to come in, sanctify me, cleanse me of this anger. Lord, create in me a clean heart, renew the right spirit within me, remove this anger, this toxic emotion and God will begin to do that.

It might take a brick by brick, right? We don't often just leave here fully filled with the Spirit. Everything's gone. Sometimes it's one brick at a time.

But eventually that wall of anger will come down. Because the walls we build to protect us sometimes, what? Imprison us. The same walls we build to protect us will eventually imprison you.

So God says, remove these things, let me fill you with my spirit and then you can go forward.

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