

# Overcoming Hostility

by Steve Mays

---

*Overcoming hostility requires dealing with anger within our lives, stopping the feeding of anger, stopping faking it with God, and stopping following it.*

**Duration:** 35:29

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:8, Matthew 5:22, Ephesians 4:25-28, Ephesians 4:31

**Topics:** "Hostility"

---

## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Steve Mays addresses the issue of anger and hostility in both society and within the church. He emphasizes the importance of overcoming anger and not allowing it to destroy our lives. Mays explains that anger, if left unchecked, can lead to resentment, bitterness, and ultimately hostility. He encourages listeners to stop feeding their anger and instead learn to confess it and deal with it in a healthy way.

---

## Transcript

It's the 2010 Summer of Sermons with Steve Mays. Anger will destroy your life. Today, Pastor Steve Mays shares ways to overcome hostility.

You must deal with this area of anger within your life. Anger, if you don't deal with it, turns into resentment. And resentment turns into bitterness.

And bitterness turns into hostility. And so, first of all, we need to stop feeding this anger. Don't nourish the grudge.

Light of the world, light of the world Hope that shines in darkness A voice that will be heard Light of the world, light of the world Hope that shines in darkness So follow the light of the world It's good to have you with us as we look back at a set of studies from Steve Mays called Overcoming. Throughout this 12-part series, he shares how to deal with certain areas of life that have a tendency to bring us down, like fear and criticism and jealousy, as just to name a few. Today, Steve focuses on hostility.

How does it start? And how can we prevent it from creeping up in our lives? You can see why this was one of Steve's most requested messages. Learn how you can get the entire Overcoming series at [lightoftheword.org](http://lightoftheword.org). More on that later. Now, here's Steve with today's lesson.

This morning, I'd like to draw your attention to Ephesians 4, verses 25-32. We're going to look at just a couple of things and bring it down to one issue this morning, dealing with hostility or overcoming hostility. And in the morning newspaper and watching the television and seeing the anger and just how people are ready to explode, like I've never seen before.

And then even looking inside of the church of Jesus Christ and seeing the anger in marriages and just how uptight so many of us are. I thought it'd be good to take a look at this area of anger and really the importance of overcoming it. Because one of the dangers is to hear what is taking place in the world and become hardened and not knowing what to do with it.

And Paul, now ministering to the church of Ephesus, begins to talk about the moral decay back in his day. He said in chapter 4, verses 17-19, this I say therefore, pointing back to everything that he has said, I testify in the Lord that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, and underline the word vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their own heart. And when I am alienated from God and when there is no life of the spirit of the living God within me, then I'm going to be blinded.

And not only blinded, but I'm going to have a vanity of my own mind. And he goes on to declare, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feelings have given themselves over to lasciviousness, which is that power of lust, to work all uncleanness with greediness. And boy, that doesn't speak about pornography and what is taking place in the world around us.

And even what is taking place on television today. And Paul talks about this society being darkened, being alienated from the life of God. But then he mentioned what we are to do in verse 20-24.

But ye have not so learned Christ. If so be that ye have heard of him, and have been taught by him as the truth in Jesus Christ, that you and I would put off concerning the former conversation of the old man. That's an old English word that means manner of life.

That you would put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye would put on the new man, which is after God, is created in the righteousness of true holiness. And so what we are in Christ.

Then in verses 25-31, Paul begins to warn them. He warns them about four deadly sins. And one of these or all these are against the work of the Holy Spirit.

Notice in verse 30. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed into the day of redemption. So do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

And the way that you would grieve him is by these four sins that he mentions. And notice in verse 25. The sin of lying.

Wherefore put away lying, speaking every man truth of his neighbor, for we are members of one another. So put away that spirit of lying one from another. In verse 25.

Then the second sin that he mentions concerning against the work of the Holy Spirit is the sin of anger. Notice verse 26. Be angry and sin not.

Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Then in verse 27. Neither give place to the devil.

And then jump down to verse 31. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor, evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice. And so the second sin that the Holy Spirit mentions is that we would not be angry.

And then the third sin against the Holy Spirit in verse 28. Let him that still, still no more. The sin of stealing.

In verse 28. Let him that still, still no more. But rather let him labor, working with his hands the things which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth.

And so the ability to be lazy and not to be responsible to live off of other people and not to do what God's called us to do. And then lastly the sin of gossiping. In verse 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth. But which is good to the use of edifying that it might minister grace to the hearers. And so four major sins that Paul now warns the children of Ephesus.

Telling them that these are sins that will grieve the work of the Holy Spirit. And that will hinder your own personal life. And I like to look at one of these this morning.

That area of anger. Where he declares once again that we are to be angry and sin not. And don't let the sun go down upon your wrath.

I thought a lot about this in the society in which we live. And the times that we are living. And I believe that with God's help this morning we're going to be able to deal with this horrible, horrible sin.

And one of the things that I find very unique about the church is the church does not think that it's in sin. But the Bible very clearly speaks about the type of sins that we live in. And he mentions at the very top of the list that lying is a sin.

A sin that grieves the Holy Spirit. And when you grieve the Holy Spirit you are going to quench the work of God within your life. And the reason why is because Satan is the father of all liars.

And lying comes right from the pit of hell. And the Bible declares that when you begin to lie no longer are you speaking the truth. The Holy Spirit cannot work in your behalf in the way that He desires to.

Because He works in the realm of truth. He does not work in the realm of a lie. So many Christians are lying thinking that they are committed to the work of the ministry and to the work of the Holy Spirit.

They're deceived. And the second thing he mentions is anger. The temper.

How many people have violated this area of having a horrible temper? It has brought shame upon the ministry of God. It has given us poor witnesses within the community. I think of Moses.

How he was taken out of the promised land and not able to go into Canaan because he smoked the rock. He was angry. And how often times your anger has really ruined the very thing that God wants to do in your life.

You're tearing things apart and tearing people apart. And God wants to build things and God wants to build bridges and you're building walls out of anger and resentment and bitterness and it's not pleasing to God. Or then stealing.

People see that you're lazy and unwilling to carry the load. You're unwilling to walk that second mile to be that blessing to the body of Christ. And people are watching how you're living your life.

Children are watching the standard that you set. And so we find that we're taking but we're really not giving. And the whole church is guilty of that.

We want to be ministered to but we're unwilling to really be a blessing in the areas of giving and finances. But we want to take and receive. And we want the benefits of a ministry and the benefits of a church that will reach the world but we're unwilling to pay the price ourselves because we want that easy life.

And so we're stealing. We're not really giving and being part of responsible people within the community. And lastly, we're gossiping.

We're talking about people spreading rumors. Destroying character. But the Bible talks about this area of anger.

It says in Psalm 37 verse 8, Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Threaten not thyself any wise to do evil. And then you remember Jesus said concerning Matthew chapter 5 verse 22, But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of judgment.

And whosoever shall say to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council. But whoso shall say, thou shalt be in danger of hell fire. And so the danger of being angry.

I think there are four possibilities of how I deal with my anger today. Sometimes I can repress it. In other words, I just bury it.

But the problem with repression or repressing anger is it turns into depression. And the good word for depression is repressed anger. In other words, it keeps popping up.

I'm not dealing with the anger. I'm simply seeking to get rid of it or to bury it. Or I can seek to suppress it.

Trying to hold on to it. Not wanting to deal with it. Not wanting to deal with issues.

And so I'm hanging on to this thing that is now beginning to ruin my life. Or sometimes I can even try to express it. I begin to explode and begin to share my feelings.

I begin to pour out my anger upon other people. Or lastly, I can learn to confess it. And I believe that we need, as a nation, as a country, as a church, to come to grips with this anger situation.

You watch the news and all of a sudden you become angry. What do you do with that anger? You're going out on a relationship and they hurt you. What do you do with the feelings of feeling rejected? Or you come to church and someone says something bad about you.

What do you do with those moments of anger within your heart? If you do nothing, you're going to become bitter. And the older you get, you're going to become more cynical and more unlikely to be used by the Spirit of the Living God. You must deal with this area of anger within your life.

And when I look at it, I believe there are three things I want to draw your attention to this morning. And this is not an easy study to teach. I've thought about it, thought lots about it, and tried to put it in a way that you might be able to grab a hold of it.

And so here it goes. Number one, I think you need to stop feeding it. Number one, stop feeding it.

But number two, you need to stop faking it. You need to stop faking it. And number three, I think you need to stop following it.

Stop following it. And let me explain very simply. Turn with me to Ephesians 4.26. Stop feeding the anger.

Stop feeding it. Notice he declares in verse 26, Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

Let me read that to you again. Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

So first of all, I'm looking in the index to find out if it really means what it's saying. He says here, Be ye angry. All of a sudden, it causes a little bit of confusion.

Now, am I to be angry? Or am I not to be angry? And the truth is that God gave you this emotion. And the word anger basically means to be angry about someone who has hurt you or to protect someone's love. So when you are hurt, it is because you've been wounded.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians, is talking about how we hurt the Holy Spirit when we lie. And so Paul wanted to say, you need to be angry and then sin not. There's an emotional place for feeling angry.

Jesus turned over the money changers. I ought to have an anger because of the unrighteousness that is beginning to plague our nation. I ought to have a righteous anger in my life.

But I ought to sin not. And that's the key. So often, we have no feelings whatsoever.

We can see someone get hurt and not even lift a finger. We're unwilling to get involved in a community, unwilling to be marked. And the reason why is we have no strength within our life.

And I don't believe that's right. If God has made you a human being, you ought to vote, you ought to stand, you ought to have convictions, but you ought not to sin. And that's what I want to kind of narrow in today.

You ought to be strong, not spineless. You ought to have conviction, not be a coward. You ought to be made known and not to be afraid.

But you ought not to sin. And that's the key. And the way you do that, very simply, is stop feeding it.

In other words, when you are stabbed, or when someone does hurt you, or when something has kind of gone out of the realm and you are being talked about, notice what he says here. Be angry and sin not. And then he says, very simply, let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

So he's given to you a definite set time frame. Don't go to bed being angry. Don't ponder it over the night.

Don't allow the enemy, notice in verse 27, neither give place to the devil. So how long can you think about it till you go to bed? When do you have to let it go when you go to bed? What do you need to do? You need to deal with it before you go to bed. And this attitude is, well, we'll talk about this in the morning.

No, you need to talk about it now. You need to learn to deal with your differences. You need to learn to listen one to another and be able to talk about what has happened, to get it off your heart and to be able to share it in a very interesting and profound way.

But to carry it to bed, to go to sleep and to think about it, to ponder it, to give Satan time to build a case against the other person, to turn it over, to turn it upside down is not healthy according to the Word of God. And the reason why is because it gets a foothold within your life. In other words, what I see this to mean is that I'm responsible for my own emotions.

If I'm exploding and uptight, it is because I have suppressed it or I have held it down and unwilling to deal with it. And so my emotions are now beginning to explode and I'm heated and I'm beginning to explode within my life. It should never get there.

It's gotten there because you're unwilling to live according to the Word of God. It says, get it off your heart. Reconcile this issue.

Before you go to bed, don't let it get a foothold. And for some of us, we've had many, many nights since things have happened to us. And some of you are bitter and very resentful towards your parents and towards other people.

And you are holding that resentment and that bitterness to this very moment. And you haven't been growing. You've come to a point, but no longer are you beginning to walk in victory.

And the reason why is because you're feeding this anger. You're beginning to play with this thing. Instead of reconciling it, putting it to bed, letting it go, growing up, dealing with it, being mature in Christ, you're feeding this thing.

And you're giving place to the enemy. And Satan is destroying your life. God isn't destroying your life.

Satan is destroying your life. And you are helping him do it by giving it constantly to him. Can you believe what so-and-so did? 25 years ago, so-and-so said something.

For 25 years, Satan has taken that lie and destroyed you. And so you're responsible. And you're to guard against bitterness.

And remember, anger, if you don't deal with it, turns into resentment. And resentment turns into bitterness. And bitterness turns into hostility.

And so I need to once again stop feeding this horrible thing in my life. But not only do I need to stop feeding it, but secondly, I need to stop faking it. You're saying, what in the world are you talking about? Well, I want to tell you right now.

Turn with me to Matthew 5, verse 23 and 24. And I've thought quite a bit about this. And so I want to speak it very strongly to your heart and hope that it really drives a point home.

Stop faking it. And notice he says in Matthew 5, verse 23 and 24, I understand the very first, I'm not to feed it. I'm not to nourish it.

I'm not to give in to it. I'm not to let it grow. But when you say stop faking it, what do you mean? Well, notice he says in Matthew 5, verse 23 and 24, Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, in other words, you're going to bring a gift or an offering.

It means you're going to give something more than your tithe. The tithe is what God expects. But a gift or an offering is over above the tithe.

And it might be, say, a gift to the missions or it might be your gift to God. It might be your consecrated offering to Him. It might be a commitment to do something for God.

It doesn't make a difference. Whatever your gift is, it might be your time. It might be your talent.

God, I want to give you my talent. I want to give you my life. God, I want to do this.

And God wants to accept it. But notice what he says, Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, there remembereth thou thy brother has an odd against thee. Underline the word remember.

Leave there thy gift before the altar. Go thy way first to be reconciled to thy brother. Then come and offer thy gift.

Very, very, very interesting. And this is why I wrote the words faking it. In other words, stop faking it.

When you are worshiping God, when you're studying the Bible, when you are lifting your hands in praise, when you are in fellowship and communicating with God, and the Bible says here, when you remember something that's not right, and it says here, when you remember that your brother has an odd, then leave your gift and go reconcile with him. In other words, I need to start listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit. And there are moments in your life that God does speak to you.

He tells you not to go down that road. He tells you to back away from that relationship. He tells you to be careful about that situation.

And because we do not listen, we make horrible mistakes within our life. We get married to the wrong people. Or we have investments that are unequally yoked.

Or we get devastated because we can't believe something happens. And then we blame God because He doesn't care. And I want to tell you that one of the key things I have found out over my whole life is talking to people after they have backslidden and walked away from God.

And I always ask them, did God tell you to get into the Word? Yes. Did you do it? No. Was God trying to warn you? Yes.

Did God speak to you about this girl? Yes. Did God tell you not to go down that road? Yes. But you wouldn't listen.

And that is the truth that I want to share with you today. I need to quit faking it with God. God knows my heart.

I know my heart. I am responsible for having a heart that is pure before God. And when God begins to show me issues in my life that are not right, God is saying, put the gift.

I love the gift. I respect the gift. I want the gift.

But more than that, how can I receive the gift if you can't even go take care of what I have laid upon your heart? And the word of the Holy Spirit is always go. He has given you power to go out into the world to preach. He said to Philip, go into Samaria.

And so he went. And he is saying to you, if you have this thought, then you are to go. If you feel you have offended your children, and all of a sudden in your heart you want to say you are sorry, you need to go.

In other words, you need to act on the conviction in your own heart. If you have been cutting with a spouse, and you want to say right then and there, I want to say you are sorry, do it. Now what is hard for a guy is he don't know how to say he is sorry.

If you give a guy an opportunity to jump out of an airplane at 30,000 feet with no parachute, or say to his wife he is sorry, he will choose the airplane every single time. There is just something about a guy saying to his wife, I am sorry. And there is something about a wife that says, well, you should be.

No. But the moment I feel something, I need to understand that I need to be honest. So here is what he is saying.

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereth thy brother hath not against them. And here is the second thing that drives me crazy. If you are listening carefully to the reading, it says if you remember, he has a not.

Not that you have a not. Not that you have done something wrong. But just the very fact that as you are praying, and you know that a brother is struggling because of you, you ought to go to him.

Now we don't like that. But I want to tell you, that is exactly what the Holy Spirit is trying to say. And the reason why is he wants you to be sensitive to other people.

And when you become bitter, you are no longer sensitive. When you become resentful, no longer are you sensitive. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make you sensitive to the spouse, to the family, to the single life, to the widow, all the way down the road.

You need to be sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit. And if your heart says, I don't care, then why should God take your gift? God is looking once again for the sensitivity of a heart that is willing to build up the body of Christ. Till we all come together in the unity of the faith.

And when God sees that the gift and the heart are the same, he will receive the gift every time. But sometimes in my worship, I tell God I love him, but I hate other people. And God says leave the gift.

I appreciate it. But go take care of this situation because this thing is destroying your life. And bitterness will start your growth.

Anger will destroy your life. And you are destroying your life because you are feeding it and you need to quit faking it and saying to the Holy Spirit, God, I want to grow in the knowledge and the grace. I need to grow right here, learning how to deal with my anger.

And so first of all, we need to stop feeding this anger. Don't nourish the grudge. Secondly, I need to stop faking it.

In other words, I need to be sensitive if I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. But number three, he says here in Hebrews 12, we need to stop following it. We need to stop following this anger.

And it says in Hebrews 12, verses 14 and 15, Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently, lest any man fell of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness underlying that, any root of bitterness spring up, and here's the key, and begins to trouble many and defile them. So I need to follow peace and holiness.

And I need to be diligent, looking to the grace of God. If I don't see the grace of God, willing to stop feeding it, willing to stop faking it, if I'm not looking for the grace of God, here's what's going to happen. Anger is going to take root.

And root is going to bring bitterness. And it's going to begin to trouble you. And you're going to begin to defile many.

And then he gives you the illustration in the very next verse. Notice verse 16, lest there be any fornicator or profane persons as Esau, who for a morsel of meat sold his birthright. And you know the story, how that he despised his birthright.

How he saw that it had no value, and so he gave it up. And because he gave it up, and Jacob took it, it bothered him. And then bitterness began to grow.

And then deceit began to explode. And then you remember he said that he's going to kill Jacob. And then he divided the family.

And then he went after Jacob, trying to kill him. And the whole situation between Jacob and Esau was a real mess. But it was all built on this area of deception and anger.

But probably the saddest of all the stories in the Bible is found in 2 Samuel. And you don't need to turn there, but in chapter 15 about Absalom. And it happened, you remember that Absalom was looking to his own father David, King David, to deal with his own son who has raped Tamar.

And there David's daughter was raped by his own son. And David did nothing about it. Absalom took things into his own hands and said, this is not right.

And so he killed his own brother who had raped his sister. And because of that, he was banished out of the kingdom. And Absalom took off.

And for years, David was unwilling to forgive Absalom. Finally it came that after years, David now becoming a bitter old man, he said to Absalom, come back into my city. And the people rejoiced because Absalom was coming home.

But check this out. But then David said, but I do not want to see his face. Come live among me, but I do not want to see your face.

And it didn't go over well with the people. Because the people heard that he was willing to forgive, but he was unwilling to reconcile. Though he was willing to let Absalom come back into the city, he was unwilling to have David and Absalom come together at his own table.

And when the people saw this, their heart turned away from David. And their hearts turned towards Absalom. And Absalom, you remember, caused an insurrection to come against David.

And David was driven out of his kingdom. Let me tell you what happened. David brought it on himself.

David would not forgive. David was a very bitter, resentful man. And because of his bitterness and resentfulness, he turned the hearts of the people towards Absalom.

And when the people had the heart of Absalom, Absalom just stepped into the scene. And David was driven from fame and from his family and from the kingdom because he was a bitter man. And that's what happens with anger.

It drives you away from being what God wants you to be. It takes away what God wants you to have. And it keeps you from all that God wants to do in your life.

So what are you going to do about it? So you get in a fight with your wife. You get in a fight with your children. You blow your stack.

What are you going to do? You're going to make sure the thing is taken care of before you go to bed. You're not going to feed it. Not going to ponder it.

Not going to think about it. You're going to deal with it right off the bat. Because you know this thing is going to kill you if you don't.

You're not going to give it opportunity to grow in your life. You're not going to give it to Satan to begin to build a hedgeway and to begin to build something. You're going to take care of it before you go to bed.

You're not going to feed it. You're not going to nurture it. You're going to kill it.

Number two, you're not going to fake it. When you're in worshiping and God's speaking to your heart and there's an issue, and you know there's an issue, and you know that God's been speaking to you, and you begin to realize that you need to do something, you need to be obedient. You need to leave your gift and go take care of this situation and be sensitive and come back and say to God, thank you, Father, for showing me my heart.

I want to make that phone call. I want to deal with this issue. Now, take my gift.

And God will take that gift. And God will expose that gift because your heart is in the right place. But you need to listen.

And thirdly, you need to start following what? Peace. To live peaceably with all men. Why? Because the bitterness is going to defile many.

And you need to forgive all the way. And so he ends up by saying, notice in verse 31 and 32, Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from among you with all malice. And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

What an indictment. And so to the church, four major sins that we don't think is sin. Oh, I lie a little bit.

Sin. Oh, I gossip just a little bit, but it's kind of information. Sin.

Oh, I get a little bit angry. You know, it's fine. I'm Italian.

I'm Italian. Sin. Sin.

Sin. Sin. Well, I'm not that lazy.

Oh, how do you do the dishes? Sin. Fathers are unwilling to be responsible. Sin.

Wives are talking about things they ought not to be talking about. Sin. People are cutting off people on the freeway.

Sin. In other words, and it all, check this out, it all, it grieves. It just breaks the heart of the Holy Spirit.

Why? Because the Holy Spirit came to build you. The Holy Spirit has come to mend you. The Holy Spirit has come to love you.

And anger destroys everything. And a lie is the heart of Lucifer. And anger is a seed of Cain.

And laziness has nothing to do in the kingdom. We are to make haste for the kingdom of God. And gossip separates the best of friends.

Pastor Steve Mays Sharing practical steps on how we can keep hostility from surfacing in our lives. Today's message is called Overcoming Hostility. And it's just one of the 12 areas Steve helps us to overcome in his popular series called Overcoming.

Worry, jealousy, criticism, discouragement, selfishness, and fear account for just half of the overwhelming circumstances you'll learn to get above and beyond. Overcoming is now available at our website [lightoftheword.org](http://lightoftheword.org) Learn how to get the entire set by calling us at 1-800-339-WISE That's 1-800-339-W-I-S-E There's more good study in Steve's SOS collection. So join us as we once again look into The Light of the Word.

Light of the Word Light of the Word Hope shines in darkness So we'll follow the light of the word

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24301.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/steve-mays/overcoming-hostility/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**