

EDWARD T. WELCH

MEDITATIONS ON ANGER, PATIENCE, AND PEACE

A SMALL BOOK ABOUT

A BIG

PROBLEM

“What a rich, insightful book! Ed’s years of working with the heart come to life in these short, piercing vignettes. They aren’t so much devotional as they are disrupters. They will disrupt your heart for good. No matter where you are in the Christian life, you will find yourself arrested by this book. I’m getting one for each of our children.”

Paul Miller, Founder of seeJesus; author of *A Praying Life* and *A Loving Life*

“The title of this book is accurate. These fifty reflections are brief and succinct, but they directly address one of the biggest and ugliest problems in the world. This eminently probing and practical book is, in part, a collection of first steps for combatting it.”

D. A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical School, Deerfield, IL; cofounder of The Gospel Coalition

“Anger can be explosive or it can slowly simmer. Whatever form it takes, it leaves a path of broken relationships in its wake. Ed Welch’s new book, *A Small Book about a Big Problem* offers a needed opportunity to consider what’s at the heart of our anger. These daily devotions patiently expose the destructive effects of anger while guiding us to a life of greater humility, thankfulness, and peace.”

Melissa Kruger, Author of *Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood*

“*A Small Book About A Big Problem* was, for me, a gentle, calm, honest conversation with a wise friend about a real problem. In our angry and even explosive world

today, that is a rare treasure indeed. Anyone open to the gospel will be helped by this book to rethink their pain and turmoil in the presence of Jesus the Crucified.”

Ray Ortlund, Pastor of Immanuel Church,
Nashville, TN

“Anger—so easy to neglect! Feel too busy to address it? Try this amazingly simple tool. Short, but sharp and straight to the heart. Perfect for your morning meal with the Lord. Your heart needs these fifty questions.”

François Turcotte, President of Séminaire Baptiste Évangélique du Québec (SEMBEQ)

“A few pages into *A Small Book About A Big Problem*, I thought: ‘He’s done it again!’ Ed Welch writes with simple, penetrating, grace-filled clarity that sets us on the path to the reality of forgiveness and hope for change. If you feel like you’re in a losing battle with anger, read this book—and read it for all fifty days.”

C. J. Mahaney, Sovereign Grace Church of
Louisville

“God’s wisdom counsels, ‘A gentle answer turns away wrath,’ and ‘The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.’ Gently but so incisively, Ed Welch plumbs and exposes the ugly depths of our angry hearts. Then he brings us to Jesus, whose mercy can replace our selfish rage with humility and gratitude. Read this small book reflectively and honestly. Expect big change.”

Dennis E. Johnson, Professor of Practical Theology,
Westminster Seminary California

A Small Book About a Big Problem

Meditations on Anger,
Patience, and Peace

EDWARD T. WELCH



New
Growth
Press

www.newgrowthpress.com

New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404
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Cover Design: Faceout Books, faceoutstudio.com

ISBN: 978-1-945270-13-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-945270-14-7 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data on file

Printed in China

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17

1 2 3 4 5

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Day 1

A Slow Fifty-Day Walk

W*hy anger, patience, and peace?* Anger, of course, is in us all. To be human is to get angry. Look closely at any day and we can usually find anger in either actions or attitudes. Just track those pesky inconveniences—things spilled, things misplaced, traffic problems that seem devoted to making your life more difficult, and people, so many people, who are ill-mannered and unhelpful.

After a little fuming, cursing, or accusing, most of these nuisances pass and we get on with what's next. Some are more worthy adversaries and disrupt the rest of the day or the rest of our life. Either way, anger is so common, almost ordinary.

To be angry is to destroy. Yet ordinary does not mean innocent. In its commonness we can overlook our anger's volatile and destructive disposition. Everyone has both been destroyed

by someone's anger and done some destroying. We are sitting on a bomb and, when it goes off, bad things happen.

A father yelled at his ten-year-old son when his son tried to help with some work around the house.

“Get out! You are messing everything up!”

When the father looked up at his son, he could tell that his son had lost something—security, a young child's enjoyment of his father, a piece of his soul—and the relationship would not be the same for a long time. There can be reconciliation, but anger leaves its mark.

Anger is known to take a toll on our bodies. It is not healthy, which is one reason we hear so much about finding moments of peace in our disrupted lives. But it is those wounds we inevitably inflict on other people—especially those who are most precious to us—that are reason enough to spend fifty days with anger, peace, and patience. We could all benefit from increased skill at grappling with them.

Why fifty days? We receive so much information and we have so little time to reflect. As a result, we might be able to remember some

facts but not be affected by them. A week later we won't even remember them. This is why there are fifty daily meditations. One-a-day will work better than skimming a long book for new information and then moving on to the next thing in your life.

Our dilemma, of course, is not new. The reality is that it is hard to keep important matters in the forefront of our minds. Scripture indicates that the skills of reflection and meditation are essential to the wise and flourishing life (Proverbs 1:33) but, like most skills, they don't come easily. They come as we give wisdom—anger's opposite—our full and enduring attention.

My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend. (Proverbs 7:1–4; also Proverbs 4:13; 4:20–21; James 1:22–25)

A slow walk seems just the right pace for this pursuit of wisdom.

Consider this as a reading strategy.

- Read only one a day.
- Talk back. Engage with the questions that occasionally appear in the book.
- Talk with someone else. The topic is relevant to everyone, and a friend or family member would benefit from hearing your thoughts, and you theirs.

Day 2

Have Your Reasons

Since it takes work to tame anger and pursue peace, we need our reasons to try. So, why bother? Each person needs his or her *own* reasons.

As you think of some, here are reasons others have given.

- I heard anger just about every day of my life, and I don't want to pass it on to my children.
- My angry words have gotten me into trouble.
- Sometimes my angry reactions scare me, as if I am losing my sanity. I don't want to feel that anymore.
- A friend told me that I am angry. I don't see it, but I respect my friend and want to take the comment seriously.

- I have too many arguments with my spouse.
- I discipline my children in anger. It works—they stop what they were doing. But I can see their fear.
- I have lost relationships and I think anger is one of the reasons why.
- There are things that happened to me years ago that still make me angry.

Scripture affirms these and goes deeper.

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. (Proverbs 14:29)

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. (Proverbs 15:18)

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (Proverbs 16:32)

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

(Proverbs 19:11)

These excerpts from Proverbs allude to the two paths we can take. One is the way of wisdom, the other is folly. The way of wisdom has life and honor all along the path—growing relationships, good reputation, coveted insight, and much that is downright pleasant. Folly is akin to death. It separates and has more than its share of misery.

Folly is what comes naturally. Wisdom? We have to work for it. Are you interested?