

**“Three Ways to Respond to an Angry God”  
(only one works)  
Amos 4:4-16**

We are understandably uncomfortable with the possibility that God might get angry with us.

This is a good and godly reaction, and at several levels.

First, anger is definitely not God’s overriding sentiment toward us. Even when his anger was at its peak – when our sin made us his enemies – in that very condition, God demonstrated the depth of his love for us, sending Christ to die for us (Romans 5:6-10).

Secondly, having received such unexpected good fortune and at such a high price to God, we are rightly disturbed that we might return to sin, despising his great sacrifice, forfeiting his good pleasure, and falling once again – and perhaps permanently! – under his wrath (Hebrews 10:19-23,26-29).

Thirdly, we are disquieted for the simple reason that God is so powerful, and does eventually, albeit after great patience, pour out judgment on those who warrant it (Hebrews 10:30-31).

Still, if, after receiving Christ as savior, we return to flagrant sin, then we render ourselves again liable to judgment (Hebrews 13:4-5). So we spend this week reviewing the sorts of sin which warrant his judgment and make us liable for exclusion from heaven. These are set out in the various ‘sin lists’ which appear in nearly every book of the New Testament. For ease of review, I have collated them into six categories.

Two caveats, to begin. First, we conduct self-examination in the context of God’s incredible, sacrificial love for us: “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:9-10). Secondly, we conduct self-examination in

the light of God’s offer of forgiveness: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God calls out our sin not to humiliate or belittle us, but to bring us to repentance, so that we seek his forgiveness and his power for life change, and not forfeit his favor.

Among the sin lists in the New Testament are the following passages: Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5; and, Colossians 3:5-9. While the passages do not all correlate neatly to the sins as listed below, read one passage each day, and reflect on the collated sins.

If you are guilty of any of these flagrant sins, confess it to God and seek his forgiveness. Confess it also to your gender group, your small group, or to a small set of trustworthy friends (not ‘facebook’ or ‘xanga’!), and ask them to encourage you and to hold you accountable for holiness.

**Please note:** In these reflections, you seek to identify concrete actions or persistent patterns of behavior, not fleeting and recurring thoughts, or past sins long since confessed to God and resolved. This exercise is not designed for the overly scrupulous to berate themselves.

***Day One: Unbridled emotions and attitudes Gal 5:19-21***

A number of the New Testament sin lists identify various intense negative emotions. In view are not occasional outbursts, immediately repented, but settled dispositions, deep-seated, often-reinforced personality characteristics. Among the censured items are: anger, arrogance, bitterness, hate, insolence, malice, and selfish ambition.

***Day Two: Financial sins 1 Corinthians 6:9-10***

In our time and social class, theft and swindling are widely viewed as sin (because they cause us to suffer); less widely-acknowledged are greed and money-loving (because they bring us benefit). God warns against both sorts of sin.

***Day Three: Relational sins Matthew 15:19***

Relationships entail commitments and obligations. Among the darkest ways to violate those commitments include: factionalism, mercilessness, murder, savagery, rebellion against parents, slave-dealing, strife, and treachery.

***Day Four: Sexual sins Ephesians 5:3-5***

Our culture encourages – even celebrates – sexual immorality. Sexual purity is a huge challenge, especially (but not exclusively) for those who are dating. Explicit boundaries and accountability groups are essential if you are to avoid such sins as: adultery, carousing, homosexual practice, and pornography.

***Day Five: Godlessness Colossians 3:5-9***

As creator, sustainer, and redeemer of the world, God alone deserves our worship. Included under this rubric are a range of God-denying sins, such as hating God, worshipping other gods, sacrilege, impiety, and the refusal to worship God.

***Day Six: Verbal Sins James 3:2-12***

James reminds us that the tongue is unmanageable. Though we all fall short, some sins of the tongue are so persistent, entrenched, and serious as to make us liable for divine judgment, including: boastfulness, deception, lying, perjury, quarreling, slander, and vulgar joking.

***Day Seven: The Love of God Romans 5:6-10***

A week spent in self-examination needs at least two offsets. For one, God loves us deeply, fervently, sacrificially, and steadfastly. This, and not our own stumbling efforts at virtue or our fluctuating obedience, is our source of hope: God's love for us and Christ's death to atone for our sin. For the other, Christ's presence within us, transforms and sanctifies us, ensuring our future salvation from God's wrath. Spend this time in reflection and worship, thanking God for his great kindness and commitment toward you.