

Through the Fire

Proverbs 14:29, 16:32; 19:11; James 1:20

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A. Be Willful (Proverbs 14:29; 16:32):

1. He who is slow to anger – A person who is slow to anger is a person who does not respond with intense emotion, so intense that their breathing increases and their nostrils dilate, immediately when something or someone disturbs them. This is a person who is long-suffering.
 - a) Slow to anger understanding – quick-tempered – folly (Folly – It can mean "foolishness" in the sense of violating God's law, or "sin" - The word also describes the activities and lifestyle of the man who ignores the instructions of wisdom)
2. Great understanding - A person who is long-suffering demonstrates that they have superior knowledge.
3. Quick-tempered – The person who is quick to become emotional ends up purposeless in resolving problems. They are intellectually weak because they are quick to become highly emotional. They end up relying on their emotions, making their emotions dictate how they think and act. In other words, this is a person who is quick to function from how they feel rather than thinking through the best path forward to resolving the issue.
 - a) Anger and abusive speech are something that Paul in Colossians 3:8 commands us to put away (Prov. 15:1 slow words), because it can lead to dissension and strife (1 Tim. 2:8; Prov. 30:33).
4. Exalts – The quick-tempered person forgets about the need to obey God, be faithful to His Word (functioning from emotions, not intellect) because they are very absorbed in how the situation makes them feel and is intensely loyal to their feelings.
5. Folly – When the quick-tempered person functions from their emotions and is loyal to how they feel they can make very foolish decisions. They can even develop a lifestyle where finding God's wisdom becomes frustrating to deal with (Romans 8:5-9). This is because their emotions are their god.
6. Slow to anger – A person who is slow to anger is one that is long-suffering before they become angry. This does not mean that a long-suffering person is not as angry as a person who is quick-tempered. This person can become highly emotional when they are

breathing, and their facial expressions are intense. However, because they have engaged their intellect and are committed to not turning it off, they are angry, but they do not sin (James 1:19-21). In the case of God, it is called righteous indignation.

- a) "By anger," says St. Gregory ('Moral.,' v. 78), "wisdom is parted with, so that we are left wholly in ignorance of what to do, and in what order to do it.... Anger withdraws the light of understanding, while by agitating it troubles the mind."^[1]
- b) A nasty and quick temper can be like a fire out of control, burning us and everyone in its path. Anger divides people. It pushes us into hasty decisions that only causes bitterness and guilt. Yet anger, in itself, is not wrong. Anger can be a legitimate reaction to injustice and sin. When you feel yourself getting angry, look for the cause. Are you reacting to an evil situation that you are going to set right? Or are you responding selfishly to a personal insult? Pray that God will help you control a quick temper, channel your feelings into effective action and conquer selfish anger through humility and repentance.^[2]

7. Better than the mighty man (Proverbs 29:8) – A mighty man is powerful in battle and because of his strength, this person is powerful in battle, most of the time achieving their objective. A person who is slow to anger is better because they function from a mindset that is guided by wisdom from God so their decision making turns out more productive than a Putin (Russian dictator) who just uses his might. Jesus' anger changed the corruption in the temple when He turned the tables upside down. (Matthew 21:12) His anger helped people like the widow with the mite.

- a) In this better ... than proverb (see comments on 12:9) having patience and a controlled temper are honored above being a soldier. In a land where safety depended on might and skill in warfare, this statement may seem surprising. Yet conquering oneself (cf. 14:17, 29; 25:28; 29:11) is of greater virtue than conquering a city.^[3]

8. He who rules his spirit - The person who seeks to exercise authority so that they master their fears, anxieties, and hurts using the Word of God, ignites the work of the Holy Spirit in them who eventually provide their self-control. This person, in the long run, ends up being better than the bully.

- a) "Better is one who is slow to anger than a mighty warrior, and the one who rules his spirit more than one who captures a city." Self-control is superior to physical strength. Conquering oneself is the greatest battle one will ever win. The "spirit" in this verse refers to the temperament of a person.^[4]

9. Captures the city – The person who uses their might to bully their way over someone else, like Putin, the Russian dictator, is less effective in the long run than the person who has control, guided by the wisdom of God, over their emotions. Hitler looked powerful and mighty for a while but the end was disastrous for him and everyone else.
10. Captures the city – The young man this week in Uvalde, Texas took over the classroom and killed 21 people because he did not master the powerful influences of his emotions. His emotions made him feel mighty, but the end result is devastating to families forever and to himself.

B. Keep God First (Proverbs 19:11; James 1:20):

1. A man's discretion – A person who demonstrates discretion is a person who works through the process of thinking through complex issues focused on finding 'practical common sense' solutions.
 - a) The understanding of The Hebrew word used here, *sekhel*, refers to good sense or discretion, a characteristic of the wise. A person with good sense is level-headed and can defuse conflict (Prov 15:18). Elsewhere, the person who is patient or self-controlled is said to be better than the mighty (16:32).^[5]
 - b) In contrast is one who is hot-headed and impatient (14:17, 29b; 15:18a; 19:19; 22:24; 29:22). A prudent, patient man is not easily upset by people who offend him; in fact, he overlooks offenses (cf. 12:16), knowing that to harbor resentment or attempt revenge only leads to more trouble. Overlooking them is his glory, that is, it is honorable.^[6]
2. Slow to anger - Slow to anger is the act of thinking through complex issues for effective solutions. This process makes a person prolong the issue for a long length of time, as they think about it, they don't become intensely emotional right away. They are led by their process of thinking for a practical solution so they end up "quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger". (James 1:19)
3. It is his glory to overlook a transgression – The person that is slow to anger is at their best when they forgive those who willfully violate God's Word in the manner by which these individuals relate to them.
4. It is his glory to overlook a transgression – Because a person, who is slow to anger is one who thinks through issues for practical solutions and are prepared to forgive those who offend them, they end up developing excellent character traits.

5. The anger of man/Clamor – The natural impulses of a person, not controlled by the Word of God to the point that all that matter is who is talking the loudest and who can overpower the other does not please God (Ephesians 4:31-32).
6. Achieve the righteousness of God – Because there is so much energy given to a person's feelings and impulses, for them to then live in conformity to the standards of God can become overwhelming. It is difficult, if not impossible, to muster the energy for both.
 - a) An angry attitude is not the atmosphere in which righteousness flourishes, James stresses this from the positive side when he says, "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."
(3:18)
7. Achieve the righteousness of God – Obeying the righteous standards of God requires energy, mental, and sometimes physical ability. When a person is intensely emotional that it dominates how they think and act, they end up lacking the fortitude, the inner ability to think, process, and obey the standards of God.
8. Achieve the righteousness of God – A believer controlled by intensely high emotions ends up allowing one of the many human emotions, anger, to cause them to sin in violation of Ephesians 4:26-27; "Be angry, and yet not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Notice the verse says, "Be angry....".

^[1] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [Proverbs](#) (p. 275). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[2] [Life Application Bible Notes](#) (p. 1026). (2007). Tyndale.

^[3] Buzzell, S. S. (1985). [Proverbs](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 942). Victor Books.

^[4] Smith, J. E. (1996). [The wisdom literature and Psalms](#) (p. 587). College Press Pub. Co.

^[5] Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Pr 19:11). Lexham Press.

^[6] Buzzell, S. S. (1985). [Proverbs](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 946). Victor Books.