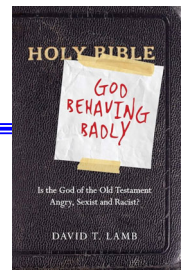


# God Behaving Badly – Lesson 2

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**Today we are going to talk about God being angry versus being slow to anger**



**Let's start with a very quick review of last week's introduction to the class**

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**We discussed why I'm teaching this class (next slide).**

**We talked about the heretic Marcion.**

**We looked at how Jesus and the NT authors viewed the OT.**

**We discussed how a distorted view of God can lead to spiritual problems.**

**We examined some basic principles of Biblical interpretation; in particular, the Bible was written for us, but it wasn't written to us.**

**Here are some of the reasons I am teaching this class**

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**We need to know how to respond to people who cherry-pick passages to attack Christianity.**

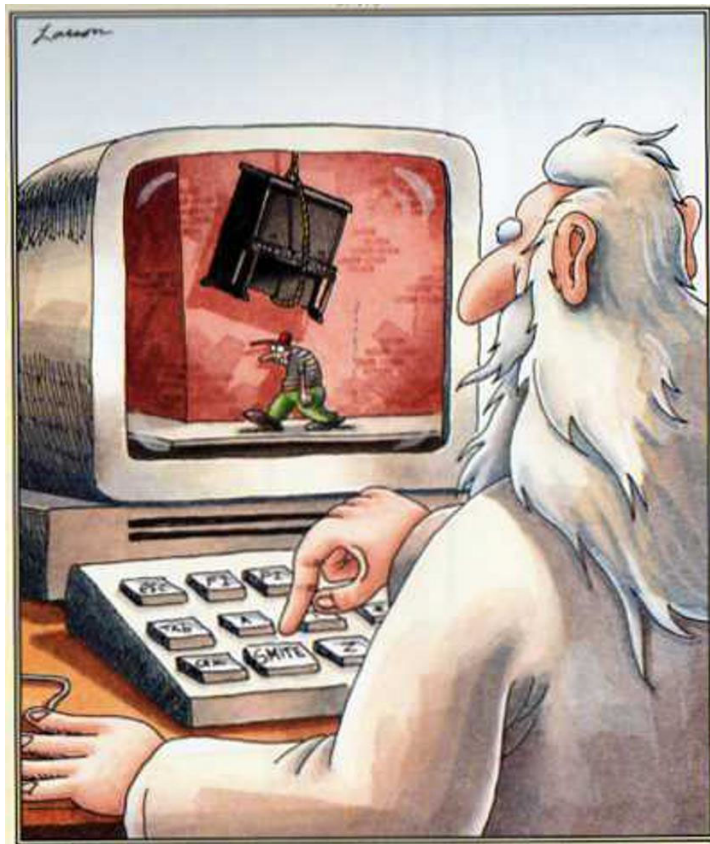
**We cannot ignore problematic passages or give unsatisfactory answers such as**

- **“God is God, and he can do whatever he wants.”**
- **“I know the Bible says that, but there is no way God would do that.”**

**Some Christians have a dismissive/negative view of the Old Testament, so they ignore or discount it.**

**There is a common perception that God, as revealed in the OT, is characterized by anger**

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## Calvin and Hobbes



Let's start with a discussion

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Why does God, as revealed in the Old Testament, have a reputation for being angry? What are some examples of when he was angry?

The Old Testament describes God as being angry about 80 times.



## This story is told in the books of Samuel

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### 1 Sam 4:10-11

<sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated, and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup> **The ark of God was captured**, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

### 2 Sam 6:1-8

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<sup>1</sup> David again brought together all the able young men of Israel—thirty thousand. <sup>2</sup> He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark. <sup>3</sup> **They set the ark of God on a new cart** and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. **Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart** <sup>4</sup> with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. <sup>5</sup> David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals. <sup>6</sup> **When they came to the threshing floor of Nakon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled.** <sup>7</sup> **The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah** because of his irreverent act; therefore, God struck him down, and he died there beside the ark of God. <sup>8</sup> Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

**Let's try to understand this story**

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**How do you respond to somebody who says,  
“Surely Uzzah didn't deserve a death sentence for  
trying to keep the Ark from falling!”?**

**Why do you think God was so angry – wasn't Uzzah  
doing a good thing?**

**We're going to look at three reasons for God's anger  
in this incident**

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**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark  
incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

**Reason 2: The decision to transport the Ark on a cart  
was not only disobedient, but it was also insulting.**

**Reason 3: Israel's lack of respect towards the Ark  
was symptomatic of a lack of concern for their  
relationship with God.**

**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

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Ex 25:10-15 <sup>10</sup> “Have them make an ark of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. <sup>11</sup>Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. <sup>12</sup>Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. <sup>13</sup>Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. <sup>14</sup>Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry it. <sup>15</sup>The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed.”

**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

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Num 4:15 After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, **only then are the Kohathites to come and do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things, or they will die.** The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the tent of meeting.

Num 7:7-9 <sup>7</sup>**He gave two carts and four oxen** to the Gershonites, as their work required, <sup>8</sup>and **he gave four carts and eight oxen** to the Merarites, as their work required. They were all under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. <sup>9</sup>**But Moses did not give any to the Kohathites, because they were to carry on their shoulders the holy things,** for which they were responsible.

**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

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**In the past, they carried it in the correct way.**

Deut 31:9 So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, **who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord**, and to all the elders of Israel.

**See also**

Josh 3:3, 15, 17, 4:9, 10, 18, 6:6, 8:33, 1 Sam 4:4

**Reason 1: Let's look at some possible excuses**

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**Isn't this a bit OCD?**

- **Think about how we transport radioactive material.**
- **We have very strict guidelines because it is very dangerous. So was the Ark.**
- **He gave them guidelines to protect them.**

**Is it possible they just forgot? They hadn't been meditating on these books recently, so they didn't know how God wanted it to be transported.**

- **It had rings on the sides. Every time they looked at it, they would be reminded of how it was to be carried.**
- **Three months after this, they carried it correctly**
  - **2 Sam 6:13 When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.**

**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

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**The Chronicles account makes it clear that God was angry because they weren't carrying it properly.**

1 Chron 15:11-13 <sup>11</sup>Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. <sup>12</sup>He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup> **It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way."**

**Reason 1: They were transporting the Ark incorrectly, that is, they were not obeying God.**

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**The timing was also significant.**

- The text repeatedly says that "all" Israel was present (2 Sam 6:1, 2, 5) – over 30,000 people were watching this parade.
- God did not want to send the message that obedience was optional since it was disobedience that led to the loss of the ark earlier and the slaughter of 30,000 Israelites by the Philistines (1 Sam 4:10).

**After this incident the ark was always carried the correct way (2 Sam 6:13, 15:24, 1 Kings 2:26, 8:3)**

**Bottom Line: They should have known better. He told them that if anybody touched the ark, they would die. (Num 4:15)**



**Reason 2: The decision to transport the ark on a cart was not only disobedient, but it was also insulting**

**The ark represented the presence of God and therefore it warranted extraordinary care.**

Ex 25:22 There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, **I will meet with you** and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

1 Sam 4:4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the **Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim.**

**The method prescribed for the conveyance of the Ark was a litter supported by people carrying poles on each side**

**Solomon was carried in a litter** (Song of Sol 3:7 – Behold, it is the litter of Solomon! ESV)

**Litters were for rulers/kings, but carts or wagons were for things**

- Offerings (Num 7:3)
- Tabernacle equipment (Num 7:7-8)
- Grain (Amos 2:13)

**It was the Philistines who first carried it this way (1 Sam 6:8-11)**

**Placing it on a cart was an insult – they were essentially saying the Ark was cargo.**

### **Reason 3: Israel's lack of respect for the Ark was symptomatic of a lack of concern for their relationship with God**

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The Ark not only represented the presence of God, but also the covenantal relationship. (It is frequently called "The Ark of the Covenant.")

Usually God is patient and doesn't punish instantaneously, but occasionally he needs to take drastic action. He would not tolerate disrespect for the object that symbolized their relationship.

**What do we learn from the story of Uzzah?  
God gets angry when he needs to protect his**

- **Commands**
- **Honor**
- **Relationship with his people**

### **Let's look at what made God angry in Exodus**

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The Hebrew word for anger literally means "nose" or "his nose became hot."

The word appears 10 times in the book of Exodus and always refers to God or Moses.

- **Ex 4:14 – The calling of Moses (next slide)**
- **Ex 11:8 – Moses is angry with Pharaoh**
- **Ex 15:7 – In the "song of Moses" about God**
- **Ex 22:22-24 – God's response if people take advantage of widows or the fatherless**
- **Ex 32 – The golden calf (God and Moses both get angry)**
- **Ex 34:6 – God described as "slow to anger"**

## Let's look at what made God mad in Exodus

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Ex 4:14 – **Then** the LORD's **anger burned** against Moses and he said, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and he will be glad to see you."

### Observations on this passage:

- God is patient with Moses for the first 4 objections he makes as to why he wouldn't lead the people out of slavery.
- God does not smite anybody.
- God was angry because he wanted to deliver his people, but Moses wasn't willing to help.
- It took God a long time to get angry with Moses.

## Let's look at what made God mad in Exodus

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Ex 22:22-24 <sup>22</sup> "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. <sup>23</sup> If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. <sup>24</sup> My **anger will be aroused**, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless."

God is concerned with justice and eliminating injustice. His wrath comes from his compassion (his people in slavery/widows/orphans).

## There is a pattern we can see in Exodus

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### 1) God delivers the people

### 2) They complain

- Ex 14:11 – They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?”
- Ex 15:24 – So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”
- Ex 16:3 The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.”

### 3) God is patient

### 4) The people promise to obey, but they disobey the first opportunity they get

### 5) God gets angry and punishes them

## Throughout the Old Testament, God is described as being “slow to anger”

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### Historical context

Ex 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, **abounding in love and faithfulness**,”

Num 14:18 ‘The Lord is **slow to anger**, **abounding in love** and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.’

Neh 9:17 They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, **slow to anger** and **abounding in steadfast love**, and did not forsake them.

## Throughout the Old Testament, God is described as being “slow to anger”

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### Prophetic context

Joel 2:13 Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, **slow to anger**, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Jonah 4:2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, **slow to anger** and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”

## Throughout the Old Testament, God is described as being “slow to anger”

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### Poetic context

Ps 86:15 But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, **abounding in love and faithfulness**.

Ps 103:8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, **abounding in love**.

Ps 145:8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate, **slow to anger** and **rich in love**.

**Note: “Slow to anger” is part of his name and how he described himself. Names in the ANE were very significant, representing one’s essence and character.**



In the OT God is said to be “abounding in steadfast love” which could also be translated “lovingkindness”

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The Hebrew word is “hesed”

It is the best kind of love – a devoted parent to a child, the love of commitment of a spouse to his or her partner over decades of marriage. It is not used lightly.

- It usually describes the behavior of God. It is used 251 times in the OT and 179 refer to God. (Remember 80 times for “anger”)
- Not only is God loving, but his **hesed** is “abundant.” In the 8 other passages that say God is slow to anger, 7 mention his **hesed**.
- Not only is it abundant, but it is “enduring.” The phrase “His steadfast love endures forever” occurs 42 times (26 of these occur in Ps 136).

Let’s look at the New Testament

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What are some examples of Jesus getting angry?

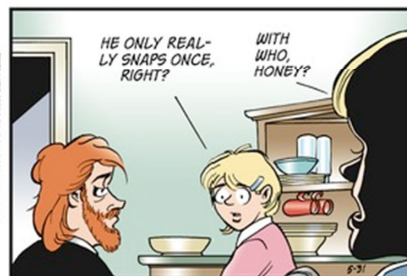
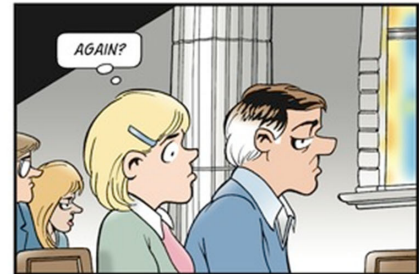
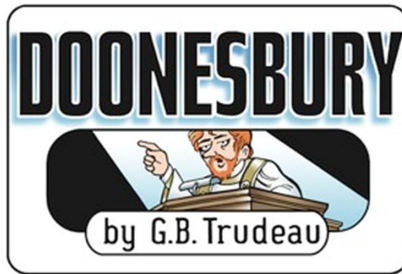
Cleansing of the temple  
(Mt 21:12-13, Mk 11:15-17, Lk 19:45-46, Jn 2:14-16)

Why?



People (especially Gentiles) were being deprived of the opportunity to pray and worship God.





**In the New Testament, only once are we explicitly told Jesus was angry**

**When he healed the man with the withered hand (Mk 3:1-6)**

- vs 5: He looked around at them in **anger** and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man ...
- **Jesus gets mad at the Pharisees.**
- **He is angry at their lack of compassion.**

## Here are some final thoughts

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Both testaments teach that death is the punishment for sin (Gen 2:17, Rom 6:23).

So, the death of Uzzah (OT) and Ananias and Sapphira (NT) should not come as a shock to us.

Why do these instances shock us?

1. The vast majority of the time when people sin, no one dies instantly, so when someone does, it seems unfair.
2. More people don't die instantly because God is gracious and slow to anger.
3. Severe punishment should remind us that death is the natural consequence of sin, instead of making us think that God is mean.
4. We take God's mercy for granted.

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Is there anything we can learn from God's anger about the appropriate place for human anger?

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Based on our study of God's anger, when is it, or is it ever, appropriate for us to get angry?

### Bottom Line

Yes, God gets angry, but always for legitimate reasons – over evil, injustice, oppression, and his people's unfaithfulness to him.

The Bible Project has some great videos

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