

Learning to Act rather than React

By June Hunt

The day begins like any other day, but ends like no other day—for on this day, he gives full vent to his anger and finds himself running for his life.

He is part of a mistreated minority—grievously mistreated—not for doing anything wrong, but simply for being perceived as a possible threat. Raised with “privilege” in the palace of a king, he himself was spared such heartless treatment. However, year after year, he sees his people inflicted with unbearable suffering—but the *injustice* continues day after day after day. Now it’s become too much to bear. He snaps. Watching one of his own beaten, Moses is filled with rage. He kills the cruel Egyptian and hides the body. When the news reaches Pharaoh, Moses fears for his life and flees Egypt.

Has anger ever clouded your judgment to the point that you acted rashly . . . and lived to regret it? When you look at the entire life of Moses, you can see the power of anger and its four causes: *injustice*, *hurt*, *fear*, and *frustration*. Ultimately, you have the choice of whether to *act* wisely or to *react* foolishly. Moses did both. And like him, you can learn to keep your anger under control—you can *learn how to act rather than react!*

“A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.” (Proverbs 29:11)

I. DEFINITIONS

INJUSTICE PROVOKES MANY PEOPLE TO ANGER.

Moses felt understandable anger over the *injustice* of the mistreatment of brothers, but what he did with that anger got him into trouble. Unfortunately, Moses allowed his emotions to overtake him. He committed a crime of passion—he committed murder. Although Moses was right about the injustice, his volatile reaction was wrong. His reactionary response only revealed how unprepared he was for the future task God had planned for him. Consequently, God gave Moses the next 40 years on the back side of a desert to realise that rescuing his people *in his own strength* was not the solution. He needed to learn this invaluable lesson in order to become an effective leader. At first he had tried to earn the Israelites’ respect by coming to their rescue with murderous rage; instead he had earned their disrespect.

“Moses thought that his own people would realise that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.” (Acts 7:25)

A. What Is the Meaning of Anger?

In the heart of Moses, what began as a smouldering ember quickly burst into deadly flames. Perhaps no one noticed the angry sparks flying from his eyes, but his spirit was consumed with the heat of anger. What do you do when you’re inflamed with angry thoughts and feelings? Fire-fighters know the danger of letting a flame get out of control. They are trained to respond quickly. You must also respond quickly in order to control the flame of anger before it consumes your life and destroys your relationships.

“A quick-tempered man does foolish things.” (Proverbs 14:17)

- Anger is a strong emotion of irritation or agitation that occurs when a need or expectation is not met¹
"An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins." (Proverbs 29:22)
- *Hot-tempered* or *quick-tempered* is often the Biblical description of an angry person.
"A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel." (Proverbs 15:18)
- In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word most frequently used for anger is **aph**, literally meaning "nose or nostrils" (figuratively, a picture of nostrils flaming with fire). Later, **aph** came to represent the entire face as seen in two ancient Hebrew idioms:²
 - "Long of face" (or nose) meaning . . . **slow to anger**.
"The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love." (Psalm 145:8)
 - "Short of face" (or nose) meaning . . . **quick to anger**.
"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered." (Proverbs 22:24)
- In the New Testament the Greek word **orge** originally meant any "natural impulse or desire," but later came to signify "anger as the strongest of all passions." It is often translated as "wrath" because of its powerful, lasting nature.³
"For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath." (Romans 2:8)

B. What Is the Magnitude of Anger?

Anger, like heat, has many degrees. It ranges from mild, controlled irritations to hot, uncontrolled explosions. In fact, *anger* is a wide umbrella word that covers many emotions.⁴

- **Indignation** is *simmering anger* provoked by something appearing unjust or unworthy and is often seen as justified. Jesus became *indignant* when the disciples were preventing people from bringing their children to Jesus so that He might touch them and bless them.
*"When Jesus saw this, he was **indignant**. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" (Mark 10:14)*
- **Wrath** is *burning anger* accompanied by a desire to avenge. Wrath often moves from the *emotion* of anger to the outward *expression* of anger. In Romans 1:18-20, God expresses His wrath as divine judgment upon those who commit wilful sin.
*"The **wrath** of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness." (Romans 1:18)*
- **Fury** is *fiery anger* so fierce that it destroys common sense. The word *fury* suggests a powerful force compelled to harm or destroy. Some members of the Sanhedrin were so angry with Peter and the other apostles for proclaiming that Jesus was God that *"they were **furious** and wanted to put them to death"* (Acts 5:33). That is why the Bible says,
*"Anger is cruel and **fury** overwhelming." (Proverbs 27:4)*
- **Rage** is *blazing anger*, involving loss of self-control, violence, and temporary insanity. After an outburst of rage, how many times have we heard this cry of remorse, "I can't believe I did that!" Yet there will always be those who vent their rage toward other people and even toward God.
*"A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart **rages** against the LORD." (Proverbs 19:3)*

C. What Are Some Misconceptions about Anger?

Do you view your anger as negative and sinful? Do you seek to hide your anger from others or even from yourself? Misunderstandings about anger give this powerful emotion a less than positive reputation. If you are blind to God's purposes for anger and if you are afraid of revealing your true feelings, you may be in bondage to *undefined or false guilt*.

"Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place." (Psalm 51:6)

Q "Is it a sin to be angry?"

No. The initial feeling of anger is a God-given emotion. The way you respond or express these feelings determines whether you have allowed your anger to become sin. The Bible says,

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." (Ephesians 4:26)

Q "How can I keep from feeling guilty when I'm angry?"⁵

Your anger is a signal that *something is wrong*—like the red warning light on the dashboard of a car. The purpose of the light is *to propel you to action . . . to cause you to stop and investigate what is wrong and then to take appropriate action*. Jesus became angry at the hypocrisy and stubborn hearts of the religious leaders. As a result, He fully restored a man's crippled hand on the Sabbath.

"He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored." (Mark 3:5)

Q "How can a God of love be a God of wrath at the same time?"⁶

Because of God's great love for you, He directs His anger toward anyone or anything that thwarts His perfect plan for you. God's anger never operates independently of His love. He expresses anger on your behalf and for your ultimate good.

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime." (Psalm 30:5)

Q "Can people be really angry even when they don't look or sound angry?"

Yes. Many have difficulty expressing or even recognizing their emotions. Instead, they have learned to deny, ignore, or repress their anger by burying it deep within their hearts.

"The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

D. What Is the Misuse of Anger?

Periodically, everyone feels the heat of anger, but how you handle the heat determines whether you are misusing it. The small flame that lights a cosy campfire, if left unchecked, can just as quickly ignite a fierce forest fire. Conversely, the initial spark of anger that could be used for good, if snuffed out, can keep anger from accomplishing its designated purpose. Evaluate how you may be mishandling your anger.⁷

- **Prolonged anger** . . . the "simmering stew"

. . . is held in for a long time. This anger is a result of an unforgiving heart toward some past offence and offender. Unforgiveness eventually results in resentment and a deep bitterness that affects all relationships.

Example:

"I'll never forgive my mother for the way she talked to me when I was a child."

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." (Hebrews 12:15)

- **Pressed down anger** . . . the "pressure cooker"

. . . is denied or hidden from yourself and others. Usually resulting from a fear of facing your own negative emotions, this kind of anger creates a deceitful heart and leads to untruthful communication with others. Failure to honestly confront and resolve your negative feelings can result in self-pity, self-contempt, and self-doubt . . . ultimately sabotaging most relationships.

Example:

"I never get angry . . . maybe just a little irritated at times."

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech." (1 Peter 3:10)

- **Provoked anger** . . . the "short fuse"

. . . is quick and impatient, instantly irritated or incensed. A testy temper is often expressed with criticism or sarcasm under the guise of teasing.

Example:

"I can't believe you said that! You're so childish!"

"Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools." (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

- **Profuse anger** . . . the "volatile volcano"

. . . is powerful, destructive, hard to control. This way of releasing anger is characterised by contempt, violence, and abuse toward others.

Example:

"You stupid fool-if you ever do that again, you'll wish you'd never been born!"

Jesus gives an ominous warning toward those who demean others . . .

"I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment . . . Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matthew 5:22)



II. CHARACTERISTICS OF ANGER

HURT PROVOKES MANY PEOPLE TO ANGER.

Every leader expects opposition from those on the outside, but what do you do when opposition comes from within—from your own ranks, your closest confidants, your trusted few? Betrayal from the outside can be bruising, but betrayal by a friend cuts deep and wounds the soul.

One such leader knew the brutality of betrayal. He had led wisely, demonstrated courage and won the confidence of his people. He was there *for* them—and they knew it. However, another leader undermined his authority and created such dissension that this man stole the loyalty of 250 of his leaders. Those whom he had trusted throughout the years—those who should have known him the best, those who should have been most loyal to him—rebelled against him. In response, however, Moses did not take personal revenge, but rather appealed to the Lord.

“Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, ‘Do not accept their offering. I have not . . . wronged any of them.’” (Numbers 16:15)

Although justifiably angry, Moses had learned how to *act rather than react*. He restrained his rage, poured out his heart, and pleaded with the Lord to deal with His offenders. In turn, God took up his cause, destroyed his betrayers, and defended his honour. Moses refused to take revenge and allowed the Lord to be his avenger because he knew that the Lord says,

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.” (Deuteronomy 32:35)

A. What Are Your Anger Cues?

The human body has natural responses when it experiences anger. These “*anger cues*” can alert you to when you begin to feel angry. Discerning your own anger cues and being aware of the signs of anger in others can help you avoid trouble. A Biblical example of an anger cue is Jonathan’s loss of appetite when he was hurt and grieved over his father’s unjust, shameful treatment toward his close friend David.

*“Jonathan got up from the table in **fierce anger**; on that second day of the month **he did not eat** because he was grieved at his father’s shameful treatment of David.” (1 Samuel 20:34)*

ANGER CUES

- appetite loss
- body feeling unusually hot or cold
- breathing faster and harder
- face flushed
- fists clenched
- heart racing, pounding
- language inappropriate, harsh, or coarse (sarcasm, gossip)
- mouth dry
- muscles tense
- respiration increased
- silence (shutting down verbally)
- speech loud, rapid, or high-pitched
- stomach upset or churning
- teeth clenched
- twitches or anxious behaviours (tapping pencil, shaking foot, etc.)
- walking hard and fast or pacing back and forth

B. Do You *Respond* or *React* When You Are Angry?⁸

What happens when you feel angry? Have you ever evaluated how others see you?

- An **appropriate response** is expressing your thoughts and feelings with restraint, understanding, and concern for the other person’s welfare.

“A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.” (Proverbs 17:27)

- An *inappropriate reaction* is expressing your thoughts and feelings in such a way that stirs up anger in others so that it produces strife. Proverbs, the book on wisdom, paints this graphic picture .

..
"As churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife." (Proverbs 30:33)

APPROPRIATE RESPONSES

INAPPROPRIATE REACTIONS

ASK YOURSELF

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Do you use tactful, compassionate words? | • Do you use tactless, condemning words? |
| • Do you try to see the other person's point of view? | • Do you see only your point of view? |
| • Do you want to help the one who angers you? | • Do you want to punish the one who angers you? |
| • Do you focus first on your own faults? | • Do you focus only on the faults of others? |
| • Do you have realistic expectations? | • Do you have unrealistic expectations? |
| • Do you have a flexible and cooperative attitude? | • Do you have a rigid and demanding attitude? |
| • Do you quickly forgive injustices? | • Do you hold on to personal injustices? |

Even though a situation may evoke anger, those who allow the Lord to be their strength will respond appropriately.

"As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Colossians 3:12)

C. What Are Symptoms of Unresolved Anger?

The emotion of anger is not a problem in itself, but anger becomes a problem when it is *unresolved* and, therefore, leads to bitterness and unforgiveness. One way you can choose to harbour anger is by refusing to face your feelings in a healthy way. This anger not only creates a rift between God and you, but also damages your body, destroys your emotions, and demoralises your relationships. Whether you recognise it or not, unresolved anger will cause immeasurable physical, emotional, and spiritual problems in your life. Jesus said,

"I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Matthew 5:22)

Unresolved anger in a person will produce some of the following physical, emotional, and spiritual symptoms:⁹

• Physical Symptoms

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| - high blood pressure | - headaches |
| - heart disease | - blurred vision |
| - stomach disorders | - insomnia |
| - intestinal disorders | - compulsive eating |

• Emotional Symptoms

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| - anxiety | - fear |
| - bitterness | - insecurity |
| - compulsions | - phobias |
| - depression | - worry |

- **Spiritual Symptoms**

- **Loss of *Perspective***

- You allow your emotions to distort your thinking.

- **Loss of *Vision***

- You lose your sense of purpose in life.

- **Loss of *Freedom***

- You become a prisoner of your circumstances.

- **Loss of *Energy***

- You lose strength to serve God and others.

- **Loss of *Confidence***

- You feel insecure in responding to difficulty.

- **Loss of *Faith***

- You lack trust that God is working in your life.

- **Loss of *Sensitivity***

- You cannot hear the Spirit of God speaking to your heart.

- **Loss of *Identity***

- You become like the person toward whom you are bitter.

Unresolved anger produces bitterness. And the Bible is clear about what bitterness produces . . .

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” (Hebrews 12:15)

D. **Do You Have Hidden Anger?**

Many people are not aware that they have hidden anger-suppressed anger that only occasionally surfaces. While this hidden anger is rooted in past childhood hurts, the underlying effects are always ready to surface on the scene. For example, when someone says or does something wrong, the one with suppressed anger overreacts. When someone makes an innocent mistake, the amount of anger is out of proportion to the mistake.

If you have hidden anger, you can find yourself at one extreme or another—from feeling hopeless to feeling hostile, and yet be totally unaware of *why* you are experiencing these feelings. The Bible makes it clear that some of our motives and emotions are hidden from our own view.

*“Who can discern his errors? Forgive my **hidden** faults.” (Psalm 19:12)*

CLUES FOR HIDDEN ANGER

- irritability over trifles
- smiling on the outside yet hurting on the inside
- committed workaholic
- denial of impatience
- must have the last word
- blaming others
- emotionally flat
- quickly fatigued
- loss of interest
- easily frustrated

III. CAUSES OF ANGER

FEAR PROVOKES MANY PEOPLE TO ANGER.

Imagine leading thousands of people through the desert. You are responsible not only for their physical needs, but also their spiritual needs. While setting up camp at the base of a mountain, God calls you to climb the mountain in order to receive the Ten Commandments along with other beneficial laws.

During your meeting with God, unbeknownst to you, the people turn their hearts away, melt their gold jewellery, and mould a golden calf, which they begin to worship! Now, God interrupts your meeting to inform you that your people have turned against Him. You flush with anger and fear as you rush down the mountain to intervene.

Exodus 32:19 states, *"When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain."*

Moses reacted because of fear. As their leader, he was afraid that God's righteous anger against his people would result in their destruction. He knew that they must *"worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire"* (Hebrews 12:28-29).

A. What Are the Four Sources of Anger?

Unexpected fires are often started and fuelled by one of four sources: seeping oil, seeping gas, molten lava, or coal bed methane (a flammable gas that can cause mining explosions). In a similar way, anger is started and fuelled by one of four sources: injustice, hurt, fear, or frustration. Anger is a secondary response to one or more of these four sources. Probing into buried feelings from your past is painful. Therefore, it can seem easier to stay angry than to uncover the cause, turn loose of your "rights," and grow in maturity.¹⁰

#1 Injustice¹¹

Your right is violated.

Everyone has an inner moral code that produces a sense of right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and unjust. When you perceive that an injustice has occurred against you or others (especially those whom you love), you can feel anger. If you hold on to this kind of offence, the unresolved anger will begin to make a home in your heart.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: KING SAUL

King Saul's unjust treatment of David evoked Jonathan's anger. When Jonathan, son of Saul, heard his own father pronounce a death sentence on his dear friend David, he asked, *"Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" . . . But Saul hurled his spear at him [Jonathan] to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David"* (1 Samuel 20:32-34).

#2 Hurt¹²

Your heart is wounded.

Everyone has a God-given inner need for *unconditional love*. When you experience rejection or emotional pain of any kind, anger can become a protective wall that keeps people and pain away.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: 12 SONS OF JACOB

Joseph was the undisputed favourite of the twelve sons of Jacob. Feeling hurt and rejected by their father, the older sons became angry and vindictive toward their younger brother! *"Now Israel [Jacob] loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him"* (Genesis 37:3-4).

#3 Fear¹³

Your future is threatened.

Everyone is created with a God-given inner need for *security*. When you begin to worry, feel threatened, or get angry because of a change in circumstances, you may be responding to fear. A fearful heart reveals a lack of trust in God's perfect plan for your life.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: KING SAUL

Saul became angry because of David's many successes on the battlefield. He was threatened by David's popularity and feared he would lose his kingdom. (Read 1 Samuel 18:5-15, 28-29.)

*"Saul was very **angry** . . . 'They have credited David with tens of thousands,' he thought, 'but me with only thousands.' . . . Saul was **afraid** of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul." (1 Samuel 18:8, 12)*

#4 Frustration¹⁴

Your performance is not accepted.

Everyone has a God-given inner need for *significance*. When your efforts are thwarted or do not meet your own personal expectations, your sense of significance can be threatened. Frustration over unmet expectations of yourself or of others is a major source of anger.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE: CAIN

Both Cain and Abel brought offerings to God, but Cain's offering was clearly unacceptable. Cain had chosen to offer what he himself wanted to give rather than what God said was right and acceptable. When Cain's self-effort was rejected, his frustration led to anger, and his anger led to the murder of his own brother.

*"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. So Cain was **very angry**, and his face was downcast. . . . Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:3-5, 8)*



"What does God want me to do about my inappropriate anger?"¹⁵

God wants you to examine the true source of your anger. Evaluate whether you are using anger to get your inner needs for love, for significance, and for security met.

- Have you been **hurt** by rejection or someone's unkind words? If so, *evaluate* . . . are you using anger to intimidate or coerce someone into remaining in a relationship with you?
- Have you been the victim of a real or perceived **injustice**? If so, *evaluate* . . . are you using angry, accusatory words to cause someone to feel guilty and obligated to you?
- Has something occurred that causes you to have **fear**? If so, *evaluate* . . . are you using anger to overpower and control someone in order to get your way?
- Do you feel a sense of **frustration** because of unmet expectations? If so, *evaluate* . . . are you using angry threats and shaming words to manipulate someone into meeting your demands?

In searching your heart, decide that you will *not use anger* to try to get your needs met. Instead, repent and enter into a deeper dependence on the Lord to meet these God-given needs.

"In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent"
(Psalm 4:4)

B. How Do Expectations Lead to Anger?

How easy to live under the illusion that we can determine what people *should* do or how situations *should* be decided. "My destiny should be *this*; therefore, people should do *that*" We pray and *expect* God to do everything we ask—we *tithe* and *expect* God to give everything we ask for. The primary problem with all these expectations centres around the simple word *pride*: "I am at the centre of my world."

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. . . 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'" (James 4:1-3, 6)

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- **Anger over Circumstances**

"I expected good things would always come my way . . . but life is clearly not what I'd expected."

- **Anger toward Others**

"I expected that someone would always be here for me, to always support and love me . . . but now I'm left alone."

- **Anger toward Yourself**

"I expected to always excel at my work . . . but now I am struggling and feel like a failure."

The more we expect people to do what we want them to do, the angrier we become when they fail us. The more demands we put on others, *the more power we give them* to anger us. The more we try to control others, the more control we give them over us. Instead, we need to humble ourselves and submit to God's sovereignty in our lives and leave our destiny in His hands—where it rightly resides anyway.

The Bible says that we are to lay our expectations before the Lord and allow Him to determine what we should receive.

"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him." (Psalm 62:5)

Q "How can I handle my anger over the losses in my life?"

When you experience significant loss in your life, you will go through a time of grieving.

- Admit your feelings—your hurt, fear, or frustration.
- Release to God all the pain you feel along with the situations that are beyond your control.
- Trust God to give you the grace and insight to deal constructively with each loss.
- Release your expectation that life must go your way.

Pray, "Lord, thank You that You are sovereign over my life. Whatever it takes, I want to respond to You with a heart of gratitude and to accept these unchangeable circumstances in my life. I choose to stop making myself and those around me miserable for something none of us can change. Instead, I thank You for how You are going to use everything in my life for my good and for Christ's glory. In His holy name, I pray. Amen."

*"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

C. What Is the Root Cause of Anger?

When we feel that our real or perceived "rights" have been violated, we can easily respond with anger.¹⁶ But what are our legitimate rights? One person would answer, "Happiness." Another would respond, "Freedom to live life my way." Yet this was not the way of Jesus. He yielded His rights to His heavenly Father. The Bible says that we have the right to live in the light of God's will as revealed in His Word. Other than that, we are to yield our rights to the Lord and let Him have His way in our hearts.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

WRONG BELIEF:

"Based on what I believe is fair, I have the right to be angry about the disappointments in my life."

RIGHT BELIEF:

Since the Lord is sovereign over my life and I trust Him with my life, I have yielded my rights to Him. My human disappointments are now God's appointments for Christ to increase my faith and develop His character in me.

*"Now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."
(1 Peter 1:6,7)*



IV. STEPS TO SOLUTION

FRUSTRATION FUELS MANY PEOPLE TO ANGER.

On that hot and dry day, Moses' frustration reached a sizzling point. He had led over a million of his people through the vast desert. But for all his efforts, they continually complained, questioned his leadership, and blamed him for their plight: *"If only we had died . . . ! Why did you bring the LORD's community up into this desert . . . ? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place?"* (Numbers 20:3-5).

Now once again, they had no water. Earlier in their journey, God had miraculously provided water by instructing Moses to strike the rock with his staff. When Moses obeyed, a stream of water—enough for all Israel—poured out of the rock. At this point, God intended to perform a similar miracle by having Moses simply *speak* to the rock. However, Moses was so *frustrated* that his anger boiled over the edge. Rather than speaking to the rock, he forcefully struck the rock . . . *twice*. Gushing *water* is what God intended—gushing *anger* is not what God intended. As a result, God disciplined His chosen leader by not allowing him to lead His chosen people into the Promised Land. (See Numbers 20:1-13.)

Are you like Moses? Do you allow your anger to result in rage, which, in turn, results in a painful repercussion? Whether you are filled with *frustration*, *fear*, *hurt*, or *injustice*, what should you do when you get angry? The Bible says,

"In your anger do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26)

A. Key Verses to Memorise

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:19-20)

B. Key Passage to Read and Reread

*"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. . . . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
(Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-32)*

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF ANGER

- *Anger* is appropriate at certain times.v. 26
- *Anger* must be resolved, or it becomes sinful.v. 26
- *Anger* can be curtailed.v. 26
- *Anger*, if not stopped, can be used by Satan.v. 27
- *Anger*, if prolonged, gives ground to Satan.v. 27
- *Anger* can lead to unwholesome talk.v. 29
- *Anger* can grieve the Holy Spirit.v. 30
- *Anger* can be totally cancelled.v. 31
- *Anger* becomes sin when it results in bitterness.v. 31
- *Anger* must be eradicated before it turns to rage.v. 31
- *Anger* must be let go before it leads to fighting.v. 31
- *Anger* must be overcome before it leads to slander.v. 31
- *Anger* must be mastered before it becomes malicious.v. 31
- *Anger* can be conquered through kindness and compassion.v. 32
- *Anger* can be fought and defeated through forgiveness.v. 32

C. Are You Harboring Anger toward God?

Problems, pain, and perplexities—you can't escape them! But . . . do you blame God for the pain and heartache in your life? Have you pointed a condemning finger and pronounced judgment on Him because He has not stopped evil or suffering? In the Bible, a man named Job had serious questions about God. In fact, we see his anger and bitterness . . .

"Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning. If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments." (Job 23:2-4)

Is anger toward God justifiable? God answers both this question and the man named Job with these words . . .

"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? . . . Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him! . . . Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (Job 38:2; 40:2, 8)

What is the answer to such intense anger against God? Can it be resolved . . . and if so, how?

HOW TO RESOLVE YOUR ANGER TOWARD GOD

- Know God's character.
 - He is just
"A faithful God who does not wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)
 - His ways are just
"Just and true are your ways, King of the ages." (Revelation 15:3)
 - He is love.
"God is love." (1 John 4:8)
 - His love is directed toward all people.
"God so loved the world." (John 3:16)

- Grasp God's purposes.
 - He brings good out of evil.
"In all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28)
 - He turns crying into dancing and sorrow into joy.
"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy." (Psalm 30:11)
 - He uses injustices to produce hope.
"We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us." (Romans 5:3-5)
 - He uses our troubles to teach us compassion.
"The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

- See God's plan.
 - His righteous judgment will come on evil people.
"For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil." (Romans 2:8-9)
 - He will bless those who persevere under trial.
"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial." (James 1:12)
 - He offers salvation to all.
"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:17)
 - He will, one day, for His true believers, make everything new.
"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

Job, who at one time had bitterness toward God, ultimately realised that he had *misplaced anger*. With deep remorse, he admitted his wrong by saying . . .

"I know that you [God] can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. . . . My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:2, 5-6)

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW PEACE WITH GOD . . . AND HIS PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE?

If you don't *really know God*, you can't trust the character of God. And if you can't trust the character of God, you can't have *peace with God*. Instead of being angry with God for all the trials of life, consider these four essential truths.

#1 Your Problem—*You (like everyone else) have chosen to sin.*

The Bible says that we all have sinned—not one of us is perfect. Each time we wilfully choose to go our own way and not God's way, we sin.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

#2 Your Penalty—*Your sin separates you from God.*

Because God's character is morally perfect (He is without sin), our sin is an offence against God. This offence results in a "penalty" or consequence. The Bible says that the consequence of our sin is separation from God.

"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God." (Isaiah 59:2)

#3 Your Provision—God has provided the way for you to be forgiven.

The heavenly Father sent His own Son, Jesus, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. You should have died, but instead, Christ died for you.

*"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
(Romans 5:8)*

#4 Your Part—You can receive forgiveness and peace by trusting in Jesus Christ now.

You need to trust that Jesus Christ died as your substitute and ask Him to come into your life to take control of your life. If you allow Him to be your Lord and Saviour, you are truly forgiven of your sins. And when you are forgiven, you are not only saved from eternal separation from God, but have peace with God. Jesus said,

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

If you desire to be fully forgiven by God—in order to have the peace of God, you can ask Jesus Christ to come into your life right now to give you His peace.

PRAYER OF SALVATION

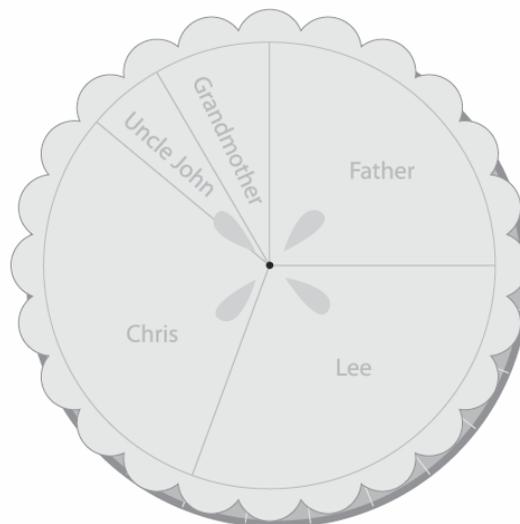
*"God, I admit I had misplaced anger toward You. I've sinned by elevating myself, hanging on to 'my rights.' Now I repent and yield my rights to You. Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sins and taking the punishment in my place. I'm asking You now to come into my life to be my Lord and Savior and to forgive me of all my sins. I give You control of my life. Make me the person You created me to be. Thank You for Your mercy and Your grace. In Your holy name I pray.
Amen."*

If you sincerely prayed this prayer, listen to what God says!

*"Since we have been justified [vindicated—declared righteous] through faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)*

D. Analyze the Amount of Your Anger

Have you seriously thought about how much anger you have toward various people? Toward whom do you feel anger? Below is a pie-shaped outline. Divide the pie into segments and put a name inside each segment to represent the amount of anger you feel toward the different people in your life (past or present). We've done a sample "Anger Pie" for you.¹⁷



As you think about your own anger, realise what the Bible says,

"Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires." (James 1:20)

E. Recognise and Resolve Past Anger

Unresolved anger is a bed of hidden coals burning deep wounds into your relationship with God and with others. This powerful emotion robs your heart of peace and steals contentment from your spirit.

"When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you." (Psalm 73:21-22)

RESOLVING PAST ANGER¹⁸

- **Realise Your Inappropriate Anger.**

- Be willing to admit that you have unresolved anger.
- Ask God to reveal the buried anger in your heart.
- Seek to determine the primary reasons for your past anger.
- Talk out your anger with God and with a friend or counsellor.

"All a man's ways seem right to him, but the LORD weighs the heart." (Proverbs 21:2)

- **Revisit Your Root Feelings.**

- Did you feel hurt (rejected, betrayed, unloved, ignored)?
- Did you feel treated unjustly (cheated, wronged, maligned, attacked)?
- Did you feel fearful (threatened, insecure, out-of-control, powerless)?
- Did you feel frustrated (inadequate, inferior, hindered, controlled)?

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

- **Receive God's Love.**

Meditate on and memorise Scripture revealing God's love for you:

Jeremiah 31:3	Psalm 32:10
Lamentations 3:22-23	Psalm 89:1
Psalm 13:5-6	Psalm 103:17

- Read five psalms daily for one month.
- Rest in the acceptance of God, not in the acceptance of others.
- Rely on the Lord to meet your inner needs for love, for significance, and for security.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1)

- **Release Your Rights.**

- Confess that harbouring anger in your heart is sin.
- Give your desire for revenge to God.
- Refuse to hold on to your past hurts by releasing them to God.
- Pray for God to work in the life of the one who has wronged you and to change your heart toward that person.
- Release the one who hurt you into the hands of God—forgive as God forgave you!

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)

- **Rejoice in God's Purpose.**

- Thank God for the ways He will use this trial in your life.
- Know that resolving anger will be used by God for your good and for the good of those around you.
- Praise God for His commitment to use all the circumstances in your life to develop Christ's character within you.

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." (Romans 8:28-29)

- **Restore the Relationship, When Appropriate.**

Even if reconciliation is not appropriate (after adultery) or not possible (after a death), you must always confess your own sin.

- Realise when someone sins against you and you hold on to anger because of that offence, you are sinning against them.
- Confess the anger in your heart, and ask the person to forgive you.
- Write out the confession first to get the wording correct:
"I realise I've been wrong in holding on to my anger against you. I'm deeply sorry. Will you forgive me?"
- Be sure the confession is free of anger and accusatory statements.

*"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is **angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment. . . . Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:21-24)*

- **Reflect Christ's Love.**

Actively seek to reflect the love of God toward the person who hurt you.

- Pray in your heart . . .
"Lord, help me to submit to Your control."
"Lord, I want Your mind to direct my mind."
"Lord, reflect Your attitudes in my actions."
"Lord, guide my words to express Your love."

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

F. Root Out the Roots of Anger

When we become adults, we assume that our pain from childhood will just disappear and no longer affect us. But this disappearing act does not happen unless we identify these past pains and resolve them. While we are not the sum of our experiences, we are shaped by our *responses* to our experiences. God does not want us to store the bad things that happened to us by stockpiling our anger. Rather, He wants us to be like a storehouse where we get rid of bad fruit and store up the good fruit

"The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." (Matthew 12:35)

ANGER ROOTED IN CHILDHOOD *INJUSTICE*

The next time you feel the surge of anger, ask yourself . . .

- Am I feeling a sense of *injustice*?

Example: My close friend was mistreated and ignored.

- Did I ever have these same feelings in my *childhood*?

Example: Yes, my parents favoured my brother; meanwhile, I was ignored.

- How did I *feel* when my parents treated me this way?

Example: I felt angry toward my parents and concluded, *Life is not fair*.

Face your *anger* from the past and begin to see how your *present anger* is connected to your *unresolved childhood anger*.

- Ask God to reveal all unresolved feelings over the *injustices* you experienced as a child.
- Ask your close family members and friends how they know when you are angry.
- Acknowledge that your feelings of *injustice* may be directed at God.
- Take personal responsibility for your feelings of anger.
- Release your anger to God and replace the anger with God's peace.
- Ask forgiveness from anyone you have offended by your anger.
- Forgive and pray for those who have been *unjust* toward you.
- Meditate on how God can use your awareness of your injustices for good.

If your anger is rooted in unjust treatment, remember . . .

"The LORD is known by his justice." (Psalm 9:16)

*"Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?"
Luke 18:7*

"God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7)

ANGER ROOTED IN CHILDHOOD *HURTS*

The next time anger wells up in your heart or uncontrollable tears stream down your face, ask yourself . . .

- Am I feeling *hurt*?

Example: My ideas have not been accepted.

- Did I ever have these same feelings when I was a *child*?

Example: When my father was not proud of me because I wasn't a good athlete, I felt *hurt*.

- How did I *feel* when my father made it known that he wanted a son who was athletic?

Example: I felt a deep sense of rejection.

Face the *anger* that is still in your heart because of the *hurt* you experienced by feeling rejected by your father.

-
- Ask God to reveal buried **hurts** from your childhood.
 - Ask family members and close friends to notice what situations seem to hurt you and make you angry.
 - Acknowledge that your prolonged, unresolved anger is wrong, even if you think it is justified.
 - Take personal responsibility to overcome your childhood **hurts**.
 - Surrender your hurtful childhood experiences and feelings to God.
 - Ask forgiveness from those whom you have offended.
 - Forgive and pray for those who have rejected you.
 - Pray for God to fill you with His unconditional love for others.

If your heart yearns for love and acceptance, remember . . .

"Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!" (Psalm 66:20)

*"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."
(Jeremiah 31:3)*

*"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"
(1 John 3:1)*

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

ANGER ROOTED IN CHILDHOOD **FEAR**

The next time you feel threatened or get angry over a change in circumstances, ask yourself . . .

- Am I feeling **fear** about my future?
Example: I've lost my job, and I don't know how I will support my family.
- Did I ever have these same feelings in my **childhood**?
Example: When my parents died and I was sent to be raised by my grandmother, I felt **fear**.
- How did I **feel** about not being raised by my parents?
Example: I felt angry because everybody else had a mother and father to protect them and to provide for their future.

Face your **anger** at God for taking your parents and leaving you with the **fear** of an uncertain future.

- If you have difficulty recalling your childhood feelings of fear, ask God to bring those memories to your mind.
- Ask your current family and good friends if they have noticed times when you have expressed distress or feelings of insecurity.
- Be completely honest with yourself and ask God to reveal where your security lies . . .
 - Is it in financial wealth?
 - Is it in close family ties?
 - Is it in a good education?
 - Is it in your accomplishments?
 - Is it in what others say about you?

- Acknowledge that placing your trust in anything other than God produces anger at Him when your security idols fail.
- Learn to place your trust only in the Lord for your security.
- Ask His forgiveness for your failure to trust Him.
- Memorise Scriptures that reassure you of God's faithfulness.
- Begin developing a grateful heart for all the Lord has provided, thanking Him daily for His generous gifts.

If your heart yearns for security, remember . . .

"He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD. His heart is secure, he will have no fear." (Psalm 112:7-8)

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

"The LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared." (Proverbs 3:26)

"You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship." (Romans 8:15)

ANGER ROOTED IN CHILDHOOD *FRUSTRATION*

The next time you feel anger when your personal efforts are not accepted, ask yourself . . .

- Am I feeling *frustrated*?
Example: My associate made negative remarks about my speech at our business luncheon.
- Did I ever have these same feelings in my *childhood*?
Example: When my parents expected me to behave perfectly and to not express my true feelings, I felt *frustrated*.
- How did I *feel* when my parents had these expectations?
Example: I felt that I was not acceptable to them because my performance was not always acceptable.

Face your *frustration* and realise that not measuring up to your own or someone else's standards indicates *performance based acceptance* and can be a major source of *anger*.

- Ask God to reveal the buried anger you have toward your parents or others in your past who accepted you on the basis of your performance.
- Ask yourself . . .
 - "Do I set unrealistic standards for myself?"
 - "Do I need to control?"
 - "Am I a caretaker?"
 - "Am I a perfectionist?"
 - "Am I a procrastinator?"
 - "Am I a people pleaser?"
 - "Am I a workaholic?"
 - "Do I tend to stuff my anger?"
- Ask your family and close friends how they know when you are frustrated.

- Understand that frustration is only a nice sounding word for the anger that deeply damages your self-worth and sense of significance.
- Understand that it takes concerned commitment and great effort to uncover deeply buried frustrations.
- Realise that you can never earn God's love, but that He loves you unconditionally.
- Allow yourself to feel your anger, and ask God for courage to express your anger in acceptable ways.
- Release your anger to God, and claim the sufficiency of His love to affirm your value.

If you feel a sense of frustration with life, remember . . .

"To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." (Proverbs 21:3)

"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me." (Psalm 139:23-24)

"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

G. Practical Questions for Overcoming Anger¹⁹

- What triggered your anger? _____

- How are you expressing your anger? _____

- What are the true inner desires motivating your anger? _____

- What is your view of God in the midst of this anger-producing situation? _____

- How should you respond to God and others in the midst of this situation? _____

- What can you learn from this experience that will help you to better handle your anger in the future? _____

*"Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city."
(Proverbs 16:32)*

H. Quick Action for Anger

The possibility of anger remains ever present. A spark of irritation can be ignited intentionally by hurtful people or even unintentionally by those who love you. God intends that you seek His answer for anger quickly before it singes your heart and burns the bridges of your relationships.

"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:26-27)

- Ask, "Can I change this situation?" (If the door squeaks, oil it!)
 - If you can, change it
 - If you can't, release it

PRAY...

"Lord, You are sovereign over my life. Since You know everything, You know I feel a strong sense of (hurt, injustice, fear, or frustration) about (name the situation). I release this situation into Your hands. I trust You with my future and with me. In Christ's name I pray. Amen."

"I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." (Psalm 143:8)

THE ANSWER TO PRESENT ANGER

"Anger is one letter short of *danger*." This saying is more than a catchy phrase; these words reflect the painful truth. And because too many times the tongue has not been tamed, a conversation escalates out of control.

- **Acknowledge Your Anger.**

- Be willing to admit you do have anger.
- Be aware of when you feel angry.
- Become aware of suppressing or repressing your anger because of fear.
- Be willing to take responsibility for any inappropriate anger.

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

- **Analyse Your Style.**

- How often do you feel angry?
(Often? Sometimes? Never?)
- How do you know when you are angry?
- How do others know when you are angry?
- How do you release your anger?
Do you explode? Do you become teary-eyed? Do you joke or tease? Do you become sarcastic?
Do you criticise? Do you become defensive?

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23-24)

- **Assess the Source.**

- **Hurt:**
Is the source of your anger **hurt** feelings from the words or actions of others?

– **Injustice:**

Is the source of your anger a result of taking up an offence against the **unjust** actions of another person?

– **Fear:**

Is the source of your anger a feeling of loss or **fear**?

– **Frustration:**

Is the source of your anger your **frustration** because something didn't go as you planned?

*"Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place."
(Psalm 51:6)*

• **Appraise Your Thinking.**

– Are you expecting others to meet your standards?

a. "She **should** take better care of her children."

b. "He **ought** to notice what I do for him."

c. "He **must** be here before 7:00 p.m."

d. "She'd **better not** call during dinner!"

– Are you guilty of distorted thinking?

a. **Exaggerating** the situation?

b. **Assuming** the worst?

c. **Labelling** one action based on others?

d. **Generalizing** by saying, "you never" or "you always."

"A wicked man puts up a bold front, but an upright man gives thought to his ways." (Proverbs 21:29)

• **Admit Your Needs.**

Anger is often used as a tactic to get inner needs met

– Do you use anger as a manipulative ploy to demand certain "musts" in an attempt to **feel loved**?

– Do you use explosive anger to get your way in an attempt to **feel significant**?

– Do you use controlling anger, insisting on certain conditions in order to **feel secure**?

– Do you know that only Christ can ultimately meet all these needs?

"My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

• **Abandon Your Demands.**

Instead of demanding that others meet your inner needs for love, for significance, and for security, learn to look to the Lord to meet your needs.

– "Lord, though I would like to feel more **love** from others, I know that You love me unconditionally."

"The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.'" (Jeremiah 31:3)

– "Lord, though I would like to feel more **significant** to those around me, I know I am significant in Your eyes."

"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" (Jeremiah 29:11)

– "Lord, though I wish I felt more **secure** in my relationships, I know I am secure in my relationship with You."

"The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 118:6)

– "Lord, though I wish others would be responsive to my needs, I know You have promised to meet all my needs."

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3)

- **Alter Your Attitudes.**

Take the following steps as outlined in Philippians 2:2-8 to alter your attitude:

- Have the goal to be like-minded with Paul.v. 2
- Do not think of yourself firstv. 3
- Give the other person preferential treatmentv. 3
- Consider the other person's interests.v. 4
- Have the attitude of Jesus Christv. 5
- Do not emphasise your position or rights.v. 6
- Look for ways to serve with a servant's heartv. 7
- Speak and act with a humble spiritv. 8
- Be willing to die to your own desires.v. 8

"Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:2-8)

- **Address Your Anger.**

- **Determine** whether your anger is really justified.
"A wicked man puts up a bold front, but an upright man gives thought to his ways." (Proverbs 21:29)
- **Decide** on the appropriate response.
"[There is] a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak." (Ecclesiastes 3:7)
 - a. How important is the issue?
 - b. Would a good purpose be served if I mention it?
 - c. Should I acknowledge my anger only to the Lord?
- **Depend** on the Holy Spirit for guidance.
"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." (John 16:13)
- **Develop** constructive dialogue when you confront
"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Colossians 4:6)

Don't speak from a heart of unforgiveness.
Do ... Think before you speak.

Don't use phrases such as: "How could you?" or "Why can't you?"
Do ... Use personal statements such as "I feel ..."

Don't bring up all your past grievances.
Do ... Stay focused on the issue.

Don't assume that the other person is wrong.
Do ... Listen for feedback from another point of view.

Don't expect instant understanding.
Do ... Be patient and keep responding with gentleness.
"Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone." (Proverbs 25:15)

-
- **Demonstrate** the grace of God, by saying to yourself . . .
 - "I placed my anger on the cross with Christ"
 - "I am no longer controlled by anger."
 - "I am alive with Christ living inside me."
 - "I will let Christ forgive through me."
 - "I will let Christ love through me."
 - "I will let Christ reveal truth through me."

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

I. Questions and Answers about Anger

- Road Rage

Q "How can I overcome road rage? I get so angry at other drivers!"

At times we all experience having someone cut in front of us or yell profanity at us or make obscene gestures toward us or intentionally bump us. Whatever the situation, the moment you feel agitated, tell yourself the truth . . .

- "I don't have to get angry."
- "I refuse to let someone else control my emotions."
- "I choose to be calm and cool headed."
- "I can stay calm in the strength of Christ"

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

- Angry Threats in the Workplace

Q "One of my co-workers has threatened to harm me. What should I do?"

Angry people can lose control of their anger and cause property damage. In extreme cases, some even murder those with whom they work. This is why you must . . .²⁰

- Take all threats of violence seriously.
 - People who make threats usually carry them out
 - Most people who commit violent acts at work have given a clear indication of their intent prior to the time they act on it
- Always report any threat.
 - Report the threat to your supervisor.
 - Report the threat to a security officer.
- When threatened, proceed wisely and cautiously.
 - Consult your company's policy manual regarding the Code of Conduct
 - Inform the angry person of the consequences of making threats.

"A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (Proverbs 22:3)

- Anger and Unforgiveness

Q “I was severely wronged by someone I once trusted. People want me to forgive him. How can I possibly ignore my anger and simply let him off the hook?”

Picture a hook attached to your collarbone. Then imagine your offender and all the pain this person has caused you attached to that hook. Do you really want to carry that person and all that pain with you for the rest of your life? The Lord wants you to take the anger and pain from the past and release it into His hands. Then take the one who offended you off your emotional hook and place him onto God’s hook. The Lord knows how to deal justly and effectively with all those who bring pain into your life. He says,

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

J. God’s Aim for Anger

Forest rangers who care for and protect national parks occasionally say they have to “start a fire to stop a fire.” At times God works for your good in much the same way. Ephesians 4:26 says, “*In your anger do not sin.*” Therefore, God clearly intends for you to experience the emotion of anger and to use it for some positive purpose. For example, He can use your anger to spark your awareness of a blazing spiritual problem that needs to be snuffed out. God often allows fiery trials so that you can become mature in the character of Christ²¹

“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

- **Anger** can be used to bring positive change in your life.
- **Anger** can give insight into your past hurts.
- **Anger** can bring your true feelings to light
- **Anger** can reveal your inappropriate ways of trying to meet your own needs.
- **Anger** can help you realise your need for the Lord.
- **Anger** can uncover your need to set healthy boundaries.
- **Anger** can be the foundation on which forgiveness is built
- **Anger** can produce intimacy in relationships, when appropriately verbalised.
- **Anger** can be used by God to convict others of sin, when appropriately displayed.
- **Anger** can be a positive Christian witness, when appropriately handled.

If allowed to smolder and ignite, anger can transform you into a ferocious, fire-breathing dragon—scaring, even scarring, those whom you most love. The only power strong enough to slay this devastating dragon is the indwelling presence of Christ. A life-changing relationship with Jesus will literally transform your mind with His mind. . . . Then He will permeate your heart with His peace.

–June Hunt



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NOTES

- ¹ Ray Burwick, *The Menace Within: Hurt or Anger?* (Birmingham, AL: Ray Burwick, 1985), 18; Gary D. Chapman, *The Other Side of Love: Handling Anger in a Godly Way* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 17-18
- ² W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).
- ³ Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.
- ⁴ David R. Mace, *Love & Anger in Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 42-45.
- ⁵ Gary Jackson Oliver and H. Norman Wright, *When Anger Hits Home: Taking Care of Your Anger Without Taking It Out on Your Family* (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 84.
- ⁶ Chapman, *The Other Side of Love*, 19-22.
- ⁷ James Mahoney, *Dealing with Anger* (Dallas: Rapha, n.d.), audiocassette; H. Norman Wright, *Anger* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980), audiocassette.
- ⁸ Les Carter, *Getting the Best of Your Anger* (Dallas: Rapha, n.d.), audiocassette; Wright, *Anger*
- ⁹ Burwick, *The Menace Within*, 33-50.
- ¹⁰ Wright, *Anger*.
- ¹¹ Oliver and Wright, *When Anger Hits Home*, 97.
- ¹² Wright, *Anger*.
- ¹³ Wright, *Anger*.
- ¹⁴ Wright, *Anger*.
- ¹⁵ Wright, *Anger*.
- ¹⁶ Chapman, *The Other Side of Love*, 21; Russell Kelfer, *Tough Choices: Secrets to Bringing Self Under Control from the Book of Proverbs* (San Antonio, TX: Into His Likeness, 1991), 59-73.
- ¹⁷ See also Ronald T. Potter-Efron, *Angry All the Time: An Emergency Guide to Anger Control*, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2005).
- ¹⁸ Kelfer, *Tough Choices*, 65-73; Oliver and Wright, *When Anger Hits Home*, 97.
- ¹⁹ For this section see David Powlison, "Anger Part 2: Three Lies About Anger and the Transforming Truth," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1996): 18-21.
- ²⁰ For this section see S. Anthony Baron, *Violence in the Workplace: A Prevention and Management Guide for Business*, 2nd ed. (n.p.: Pathfinder, 2001).
- ²¹ Oliver and Wright, *When Anger Hits Home*, 75-87.

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