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ANGER

Facing the Fire Within

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THE LINDELL KEYS FOR RECOVERY HANDBOOK

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- God: Who is He?
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The Thoughts and Emotions Series

ANGER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Personal Note 1

Introduction 3

Definitions

Injustice Ignites Anger 9

What Is the Meaning of Anger? 9

What Is the Magnitude of Anger? 11

What Is the Misuse of Anger? 12

What Are Misconceptions about Anger? 15

What Is God’s Heart on Anger? 18

Characteristics

Hurt Ignites Anger 23

What Are Your “Anger Cues”? 24

What Are Symptoms of Unresolved Anger? 26

What Are Symptoms of Hidden Anger? 29

Do You Act or React When You Are Angry? 30

Causes

Fear Ignites Anger 37

What Are the Four Sources of Anger? 37

What Causes a Sudden Increase in Anger Intensity? 41

Why Do Expectations Lead to Anger? 43

What Is the Root Cause of Anger?.....	46
What Is God’s Plan for Your Life?	48

Steps to Solution

Frustration Ignites Anger	55
Key Verses to Memorize	56
Key Passage to Read	56
How to Have a Transformed Life	57
How to Measure the Amount of Your Anger	60
How to Analyze Your Anger	62
How to Resolve Your Anger toward God	65
How to Resolve Your Past Anger	69
How to Rid Yourself of Childhood Anger	74
How to Apply the Quick Answer to Anger.....	76
How to Communicate Your Anger to Another	84
How to Answer Questions about Anger.....	87

Scriptures to Memorize..... 93

Endnotes & Bibliography..... 97

A PERSONAL NOTE

from Mike Lindell

My passion is to see people recover from addiction! And that's why I'm proud to partner with author June Hunt and Hope for the Heart, and so excited to use the *Keys for Living* as part of the Lindell Recovery Network. People everywhere are struggling with addictions, wounds, and challenges in life. They need hope. They need help. And the *Keys for Living* provide that hope and real answers from God's Word.

This is the best material I've seen in biblical counseling and caregiving . . . with over 100 topics that speak to almost every presenting problem. There's nothing else like them. They take God's Word and apply it to life's challenges.

The *Keys for Living* are exceptional and outstanding resources for those who need help in overcoming the obstacles they face, and above all, to find Christ.

Read this book. Share it with others. Ask God in prayer to make it real in your life.

May God bless you as you do it!



Mike Lindell

Lindell Recovery Network

INTRODUCTION

When people see me, they don't see me as an "angry person." And most of the time, I'm not. Yet, how well I remember *that* day—the scenario remains vivid in my mind . . .

I opened my friend's desk drawer (something I had never done before) to get a few paper clips. Within a few seconds, I was staring at a piece of paper with these words, "We don't need any more June Hunts in this world." I was stunned. I was hurt. I was frustrated. I was angry! Just an hour before, the writer of those words said to me, "I'm really for you. I want to help you. I want to support you." (Some support!) How deeply the words had cut my heart!

Immediately, I felt intense anger welling up inside me. I knew that if I didn't find a way to reduce the pressure, I would explode. So I thought to myself, *I need to go outside and jog—that will release my pent-up energy.*

Having laced up my tennis shoes, I walked out the front door ready to defeat my anger through my walking/jogging/walking routine. A few moments into my trek, I noticed my arms swinging higher than normal. I even said to myself, *This is really unusual!*

After 20 minutes, I wasn't feeling any relief. I expected the jogging to be like releasing a valve on a pressure cooker, but it wasn't working—the valve over my heart was stuck! In fact, the longer I jogged, the deeper my hurt went. I soon realized why: I had been rehearsing, over and over, how much I had been wronged, deceived, and betrayed.

Of course, the Bible says, "[Love] *keeps no record of wrongs*" (1 Corinthians 13:5). This I knew. I was certainly not helping myself.

I remember thinking, *I'm not feeling any better—I have to do something else.* Then I started praying, "Lord, teach me to act rather than react." Actually, I said those words over and over: "Lord, teach me to act rather than react. Teach me to act rather than react . . ." Soon I noticed that I was praying those words to the rhythmic pattern of my running as my tennis shoes hit the pavement.

At the end of an hour, my heart was at peace. I was no longer being controlled by that debilitating sense of betrayal. Of course, the initial problem wasn't solved—confrontation would still be necessary. But I was able to release my anger to the Lord that night, as well as the

situation that caused it. Then the next day during the confrontation, my anger returned, but this time I was able to control it rather than let it control me.

My experience taught me this: when you feel angry about an issue, if you can, change it—if you can't, release it. Release it into the hands of your sovereign Savior.

Ever since that day, when I feel a strong sense of anger, I remember to pray, “*Lord, teach me to act rather than react.*” When I do this, God gives me His grace and power to weigh my words and speak with self-control.

From my simple prayer, born out of anger, came a song. And contained within this song, toward the end, are these words:

When I feel disappointment with no soothing ointment,
and nothing is going my way,
When my heart has been breaking and my soul is aching,
and I have no more words to say.

I'm not under illusion, the only solution
is die to my rights each day,
Because Christ is inside me to comfort and guide me,
and His life has taught me to pray.

Lord, teach me to act rather than react,
with your Spirit in control of me.
Lord, teach me to help rather than hinder,
with the Lord being Lord of me.

Lord, teach me to trust rather than mistrust,
with your Spirit inside my soul.
Lord, teach me to act rather than react,
I give you complete control.

Today, as you look at anger in your own life and look for the answer to anger, I pray that you too will say, “*Lord, teach me to act rather than react,*” and then lean on Him for the strength to do it.

June Hunt
Founder, Hope For The Heart

*June Hunt, *How to Handle Your Emotions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), 65–67.

ANGER

Facing the Fire Within

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

He's part of a mistreated minority—grievously persecuted—not for doing something wrong but for being perceived as a threat. Raised with privilege in the palace of a king, he had been spared the heartless treatment inflicted on his kinsmen. But watching the *injustice* day after day and year after year finally becomes too much for him to bear.

When he sees one of his own people suffering an inhumane beating at the hands of an Egyptian, Moses is *filled with rage*. He snaps. In an instant, he kills the Egyptian and hides the body in the sand. But his angry, impetuous act is not committed in secret. When news of the murder reaches Pharaoh, Moses fears for his life and flees. (See Exodus chapter 2.)

When you look at the life of Moses, you can see both the power and the problems inherent in anger. Has anger ever clouded your judgment to the point that you reacted rashly and lived to regret it? Ultimately, you have the choice to *act* wisely or to *react* foolishly. In his lifetime, Moses does both. Like him, you too can face the fiery anger within and learn to keep it under control. In doing so, you will demonstrate wisdom because . . .

*“Fools give full vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end.”*

(PROVERBS 29:11)

DEFINITIONS



*“Anger, like fire,
can be dangerous.
If not kept in check,
it can get out of control,
damaging and
destroying our lives
and relationships.”*



Injustice Ignites Anger

Understandably, Moses feels anger over the *unjust* treatment of his Hebrew brothers, but what he does with that anger causes trouble. Moses allows his anger to overpower him. Acting on impulse, he commits a crime—murder.

Although he is right about the *injustice*, his reaction is wrong. His hot-blooded volatility reveals how unprepared he is for the task God has planned for him. Consequently, God keeps Moses in the desert for the next 40 years so he will realize that rescuing his own people *in his own way* will ultimately fail.

Moses needs to learn this vital lesson well to become the leader through whom God accomplishes His own will in His own *supernatural way*. In truth, Moses has tried to earn the Israelites' respect by coming to their rescue. Instead, his murderous rage earns only their disrespect: “Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not” (Acts 7:25).

What begins as a smoldering ember in the heart of Moses quickly bursts into deadly flames; his spirit is consumed with the heat of anger.

*“Looking this way and that and seeing no one,
he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”*

(EXODUS 2:12)

What Is the Meaning of Anger?

Anger is like the flame of a candle—it is associated with “heat” of varying degrees. Temperatures are observed by the hues of the flame. No matter the blues, yellows, oranges, and reds, we all know that *it’s hot*. If we put our hands into the fire, we will get burned.

And so it is with anger: The higher the degree of heat, the more people get hurt—including you.

“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?”

(PROVERBS 6:27)

Anger is a strong emotion of irritation or agitation that occurs when a need or expectation is not met.¹

“An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins” (PROVERBS 29:22).

Angry people in the Bible are often described as *hot-tempered* and *quick-tempered*.

“A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel” (PROVERBS 15:18).

“Anger” in the Old Testament is most frequently the Hebrew word *aph*, which literally means “nose” or “nostrils,” depicting nostrils flaring with anger. 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*”

“A quick-tempered person does foolish things” (PROVERBS 14:17).

In the New Testament, there are two Greek words related to anger.

— The Greek word *orge* can be translated as “impulse” or “wrath.” It is often used in contexts of punishment or vengeance, depicting God’s passionate anger or wrath.³

— The Greek word *thumos* can be translated as “passion” and refers to the strong expression of anger or wrath by God or individuals.⁴

“For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger” (ROMANS 2:8).

What Is the Magnitude of Anger?

The next time you light a candle, observe the hues and shades of the flame. Notice the *light blue* at the center—that’s actually the hottest part of the flame, measuring 2,552 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature then diminishes from the inner core to the outer sides, signified by shades of yellow, orange, then red, at around 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit.⁵

Likewise, anger can vary in intensity. Anger can lightly singe or severely scorch. It ranges from mild agitation to hot explosions, from controlled irritations to uncontrolled eruptions. In the Bible, Joseph’s two brothers displayed the destructive heat of anger.

*“Simeon and Levi . . . have killed men in their anger . . .
Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel!”*
(GENESIS 49:5–7)

Anger is an umbrella word covering many levels of the emotion.

Indignation is simmering anger provoked by something appearing unjust or unkind and is often perceived as justified. Jesus became “*indignant*” when the disciples prevented parents from bringing their children to Him so He might touch 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, God reveals the outward expression of His wrath against wickedness.

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (ROMANS 1:18).

Fury is fiery anger so fierce that it consumes 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 Jesus was God that “*when they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death*” (Acts 5:33). The Bible says . . .

“Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming” (PROVERBS 27:4).

Rage is blazing anger resulting in loss of self-control, often to the extreme of violence and temporary insanity. After an outburst of rage, a cry of remorseful regret or disbelief is often expressed: “I can’t believe I did that!” Yet those who continue to vent their rage toward others—including toward God—find themselves defeated by their own destructive decisions and ruined relationships.

“A person’s own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the LORD” (PROVERBS 19:3).

What Is the Misuse of Anger?

Everyone feels the heat of anger at some point. How you handle that heat determines whether or not you are misusing it. The small flame that lights a cozy 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 too quickly, can keep anger from accomplishing its designated purpose. If you are wise, you have learned how to handle your anger, and you have learned how to help others handle their anger. The Bible says . . .

“The wise turn away anger.”

(PROVERBS 29:8)

Prolonged anger—the simmering stew

This type of anger is held in for a long time. It results from an unforgiving heart toward a past offense and the offender. Unforgiveness left unresolved eventually results in resentment and deep bitterness that harms close relationships.

EXAMPLE: “I’ll never forgive the way he talked to me years ago.”

But the Bible says, *“See to it that no one falls short of 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

This is denied or hidden anger, usually developing from a fear of facing negative emotions. It can create a deceitful heart and lead to lying to ourselves and others. Failure to honestly confront and resolve angry feelings can result in self-pity, self-contempt, and self-doubt—searing close relationships.

EXAMPLE: “I never get angry—maybe just a little irritated at times.”

But the Bible says, *“Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech”* (1 PETER 3:10).

Provoked anger—the short fuse

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

EXAMPLE: “I can’t believe you said that! You’re so childish!”

But the Bible says, *“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools”* (ECCLESIASTES 7:9).

Profuse anger—the volatile volcano

This anger is powerful, destructive, and hard to control and is characterized by contempt, violence, and abuse toward others.

EXAMPLE: “You fool—if you do that again, you’ll wish you’d never been born!”

But Jesus says, “*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. . . . And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell*” (MATTHEW 5:21–22).

Misplaced Anger

Question: “**Why do some take their anger out on innocent people who have nothing to do with the problem?**”

Answer: Imagine, after having a flat tire, the boss begins yelling at his employee who, in turn, arrives home and yells at his wife. The wife then screams at their son who, in turn, kicks the cat! This could be called “The Blame Game.”

Ultimately, angry people who are afraid to confront those who hurt them will often pick targets they can safely overpower. Their easy victory inflates their sense of power, giving them a false sense of significance.

Bullies are known for misplacing their anger onto weaker, more vulnerable people. More often than not, bullying is a case of “playing it safe” and venting on someone who can’t fight back. A bully’s stored-up anger generally comes from being abused by someone they feel powerless to confront.

Abusers commonly spew anger on those closest to them—those most vulnerable to them. All too often, abusive adults were abused as children and grew up with the intense pressure of unresolved anger. When their anger ignites, everyone around them feels the explosion and falls victim to their blistering, lavalike anger.

Self-injurious sufferers generally carry a sizable amount of self-contempt and self-loathing. As children, many were falsely blamed for family problems and assigned the role of family scapegoat. They internalized the lies spoken to them,

and now as adults they are quick to assume blame for all that goes wrong around them. The anger they could rightly feel toward others, they wrongly aim back at themselves—anger they are quick to receive.

Self-protectors don't have the strength of character to express their anger toward those who cause it. They express anger in detrimental ways.

Imagine a lighted candle—conveying a certain charm, putting off a warm glow, often releasing a pleasantly fragrant aroma. Now picture a flaming candle left unattended on furniture, a common cause of home fires. A simple candle can melt onto a flammable surface that catches fire and quickly engulfs a room. So it is with *misplaced anger*—it only destroys. The Bible says . . .

*“Stop being angry! Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm.”*
(PSALM 37:8 NLT)

What Are Misconceptions about Anger?

Do you always view anger as negative and sinful? Do you seek to hide your anger from others, even from yourself? Misconceptions about anger can cause serious problems in your life and relationships.

But God has a purpose for anger. His Word offers answers to common questions, even those about emotions. The Bible says . . .

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”*
(PSALM 32:8)

Anger and Sin

Question: “Is it a sin for me to be angry?”

Answer: No. Anger is a God-given emotion. In fact, Jesus felt and expressed anger, yet He did not sin (Mark 3:5; Hebrews 4:15). The way you handle or *express* your anger determines whether or not it leads to sin. The Bible says . . .

“Be angry, and do not sin.”

(PSALM 4:4 ESV)

Anger and Guilt

Question: “How can I keep from feeling guilty when I’m angry?”

Answer: 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 respond*—to cause you to stop, to evaluate what’s wrong, and to take appropriate action.⁶ Jesus became angry at the Pharisees who interpreted “resting on the Sabbath” to excess—to the extent that, in their eyes, healing the sick on the Sabbath was an offense worthy of death. In sharp contrast, Jesus prioritized people over position and 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)

Anger and God's Nature

Question: “How can a God of love be a God of wrath at the same time?”

Answer: Consider the person you love the most. Because you care about their well-being, you want what's best for them. If they make harmful choices, it is natural to feel concerned. If they refuse to change and continue to make harmful choices, it is natural to feel anger. In the same way, the Bible is clear that God is loving (1 John 4:8). However, when people make harmful and sinful choices and refuse to change their ways, God's anger is ignited. He knows what is best and cares about our well-being. His anger is not opposed to His love—it is an expression of His love.

“His anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime”

(PSALM 30:5)

People Who Don't Appear Angry

Question: “Can people be angry even when they don't look or sound angry?”

Answer: Yes. Some people have learned to maintain control in anger-inducing situations and may not appear angry. Others have difficulty expressing or even recognizing their emotion of anger. Instead, they have learned to deny, ignore, or repress their anger by burying it deep within their hearts. However, our anger is not hidden from God, who sees it and understands it.

“The LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought.”

(1 CHRONICLES 28:9)

What Is God's Heart on Anger?

Forest rangers who care for and protect national parks occasionally say they have to “start a fire to stop a fire.” These backfires help deprive the main fire of fuel and better enable forest rangers and firefighters to contain the blaze. God can work for our good in much the same way.

Anger, like fire, can be dangerous. If not kept in check, it can get out of control, damaging and destroying our lives and relationships. But just like fire, anger can be used for good purposes.

The Bible reveals the wisdom of God's counsel on anger.

*“To God belong wisdom and power;
counsel and understanding are his.”*

(JOB 12:13)

Anger is a God-given emotion. God Himself experiences anger.

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (EXODUS 34:6–7).

Anger itself is not a sin but what you do with it can lead to sin.

“Be angry and do not sin” (EPHESIANS 4:26 ESV).

Anger can propel you to action—to correct an injustice.

“He [Jesus] looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, ‘Hold out your hand.’ So the man held out his hand, and it was restored!” (MARK 3:5 NLT).

Anger can be learned behavior, so be careful whom you befriend.

“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared” (PROVERBS 22:24–25).

Anger can lead to abusive language.

“You must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips” (COLOSSIANS 3:8).

Anger can lead to fighting.

“An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin” (PROVERBS 29:22 NLT).

God wants you to be slow to anger.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (JAMES 1:19–20).

God wants you to refrain from anger.

“Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil” (PSALM 37:8).

God wants you to deal with your anger quickly.

“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (EPHESIANS 4:26).

God wants you to free yourself from anger.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” (EPHESIANS 4:31).

God wants you to talk to Him about your anger.

“In my distress I prayed to the LORD, and the LORD answered me and set me free” (PSALM 118:5 NLT).

God wants you to be saved through faith in Christ so you do not experience His anger.

“God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:9).



CHARACTERISTICS



“When you identify your anger cues, you will be in a better position to quickly identify when you are angry. Then you can direct your energy toward producing a positive outcome.”



Hurt Ignites Anger

Have you ever been hurt or betrayed by a close friend or family member? It's one thing when an enemy hurts you, but betrayal by a friend deeply wounds the soul. So what do you do when opposition comes from among your own circle, your closest confidants, your trusted few?

One national leader, Moses, knew the *hurt* of such betrayal. He led wisely, demonstrated courage, and won the confidence of his people. *He was there for them*, and they knew it.

However, Moses's authority was undermined by a subordinate, creating such dissension that he successfully stole the loyalty of 250 others. The people who trusted Moses throughout the years—who knew him best—who should have been most loyal turned against him. In response, Moses did not express his anger by taking personal revenge. He did not react impulsively. Rather, he appealed to the Lord to act on his behalf.

*“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 learned how to face the fiery anger within and to *act wisely rather than to react foolishly*. 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 honor. Moses refused to take revenge, but rather allowed the Lord to be his avenger.

“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”

(DEUTERONOMY 32:35)

What Are Your “Anger Cues”?

Perhaps the most vivid illustration of anger is a craggy, massive land formation that sputters with steam and spews molten rock—a *volcano*.

Like anger, before a toxic flow emerges, there is a gurgling beneath the surface. A series of events creates instability and sets the stage for an explosive outburst. Scientists have learned how to look for “cues” that a volcano is about to erupt, including the release of steam and gas, small earthquakes and tremors, and swelling of the volcano’s slopes.

Likewise, the human body has a *physical reaction* when it experiences anger. These “anger cues” can alert you when you begin to feel angry. Learning to discern your own anger cues can help you avoid trouble. Likewise, being aware of the signs of anger in others can alert you of the need to defend yourself.

A biblical example of an anger cue is Jonathan’s refusing to eat 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 . . . he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father’s shameful treatment of David.”

(1 SAMUEL 20:34)

Anger Cues Checklist

Identify your anger cues. Place a check mark (✓) beside the following questions that are true of you:

- Do you have a decreased appetite?
- Do you have tense muscles?
- Do you feel unusually hot or cold?

- Do you have increased perspiration or sweaty palms?
- Do you feel flushed?
- Do you clench your teeth?
- Do you clench your fists?
- Do you experience dry mouth?
- Do you become silent, shutting down verbally?
- Do you use loud, rapid, or high-pitched speech?
- Do you breathe faster and harder than normal?
- Do you experience an upset, churning stomach?
- Do you walk hard and fast or pace back and forth?
- Do you twitch or exhibit anxious behavior (tapping a pencil, shaking a foot)?
- Do you use harsh, coarse, or inappropriate language (gossip, sarcasm, profanity)?
- Do you feel your heart racing or pounding?

When you identify your anger cues, you will be in a better position to quickly identify when you are angry. Then you can direct your energy toward producing a positive outcome.

*“I will call to you whenever I’m in trouble,
and you will answer me.”*

(PSALM 86:7 NLT)

Anger and Heart Health

Question: “Can anger cause any serious heart problems?”

Answer: Yes. A Yale University study published in March 2009 concluded that anger can trigger potentially deadly heart rhythms in certain vulnerable people.⁷

Dr. Rachel Lampert and colleagues studied 62 patients with heart disease and implantable defibrillators. These devices can detect dangerous heart arrhythmias and deliver an electrical shock to restore a normal heartbeat. The electrical activity of the heart was measured as each patient recounted a recent angry episode. Results showed that the anger did increase the electrical instability of the heart in these patients. After following these patients for three years, Dr. Lampert said the study suggests that anger really does impact the heart's electrical system in ways that can lead to sudden death.

When tempted to give in to angry outbursts, consider the wisdom and physical benefit from turning away from anger.

*“Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD,
and turn away from evil.*

*It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.”*

(PROVERBS 3:7–8 ESV)

What Are Symptoms of Unresolved Anger?

A volcanic crater contains toxic gases, a steaming underbelly, and razor-sharp rock fragments. Deep within the heart of unresolved anger, the darkened deposits of a critical spirit—*bitterness and depression* (along with other negative emotions)—can be found. The longer unresolved anger is allowed to fume and fester, the more dangerous it can be for you and those around you.

Refusing to face your feelings in a healthy way prolongs *unresolved* anger until it eventually becomes *harbored* anger. Unresolved anger can impact your relationship with God. It can also damage your

body, devastate your emotions, and destroy your relationships. God knows that anger can be unhealthy. When Jonah was upset and angry, God asked . . .

“Is it right for you to be angry?”

(JONAH 4:4)

Unresolved anger is known to produce many of the following physical, emotional, and spiritual effects:

Physical Effects⁸

Breathing difficulties
 Headaches
 Heart disease
 High blood pressure
 Insomnia
 Skin problems
 Stomach problems
 Stroke

Emotional Effects

Anxiety
 Bitterness
 Compulsions
 Depression
 Fear
 Hatred
 Insecurity
 Phobias

Spiritual Effects

Anger is no light matter in God’s sight. James was right when he said that man’s anger does not accomplish God’s righteous purposes (James 1:19–20). In addition to the physical and emotional effects, anger can drastically affect us spiritually. Anger can lead you to ...

Foolish behavior

“A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated” (PROVERBS 14:17).

Curse God

“Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God” (ISAIAH 8:21).

Sin

“An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin” (PROVERBS 29:22 NLT).

Be ensnared by the devil

“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).

Be disqualified from leadership

“Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain” (TITUS 1:7).

Be out of step with the Spirit

“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. . . . The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are . . . enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions” (GALATIANS 5:16, 19–20 NASB).

Have hindered prayers

“I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling” (1 TIMOTHY 2:8 NASB).

Pay the penalty for the consequences of angry behavior

“A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again” (PROVERBS 19:19).

It’s no wonder that God repeatedly commands us to be slow to anger and refrain from anger! Anger affects every area of our lives. The cost of unresolved anger is too high. We are in serious danger—physically, emotionally and spiritually—if we don’t deal with this volatile emotion. God wants us to come to Him to find help with our anger.

*“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace
to help us in our time of need.”*

(HEBREWS 4:16)

What Are Symptoms of Hidden Anger?

One of the most well-known volcanoes in recent history has been Mount St. Helens in Washington State. In May of 1980, this rumbling and raging mountain sent a pyrotechnic blast of ash and molten rock over more than 230 square miles, killing 57 people. Other eruptions of Mount St. Helens have since occurred, but not with such catastrophic results. Actually, they have served to clue scientists in on an interesting fact: The magma driving later volcanic activity was likely left over from the 1980s' eruption.⁹

In similar ways, hidden anger from childhood hurts can *directly* affect present-day outbursts. Many people live unaware that they have hidden anger (suppressed anger that occasionally surfaces). Often rooted in past childhood hurts, the underlying effects sit below the surface. For example, when someone says or does something “wrong,” the one with suppressed anger often overreacts. When someone makes an innocent mistake, the magnitude of anger is out of proportion to the mistake.

If you have hidden anger, you might find yourself experiencing emotions like hopelessness and hostility. You might be unaware of why you're experiencing these feelings. The Bible makes it clear that some of our motives and emotions are hidden from our own view.

“Who can discern their own errors?

Forgive my hidden faults.”

(PSALM 19:12)

Clues to Finding Hidden Anger

- Do you become irritable over little things?
- Do you smile on the outside, yet feel upset inside?
- Do you ever deny being impatient?
- Do you have to have the last word?
- Do those close to you say that you blame others?

- Do you feel emotionally flat?
- Do you find yourself quickly fatigued?
- Do you become easily frustrated?
- Do you find your identity and worth in working excessively?
- Do you have a loss of interest in life?

If any of these questions are true of you, ask the Lord to reveal any hidden anger in your heart.

*“Search me, 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)

Do You Act or React When You Are Angry?

Scientists continually develop technology to help them act when preparing for a volcanic eruption, rather than to simply react to its destructive power. Monitoring devices known as “spiders” (because of their spindly legs) have been used to crawl around the interior of craters and measure seismic activity. They provide helpful information and live updates so that proper authorities can prepare and take appropriate measures if there is volcanic activity.¹⁰

People who choose to act rather than react to anger share some similarities with these “analytical spiders”—reason rules the day and being prepared can help avoid disaster.

When you are angry, does reason rule or do tense emotions take control? Do you make choices that lead to *appropriate actions* . . . or do you have knee-jerk reactions that lead to *inappropriate reactions*?¹¹ If you have never evaluated what happens when you feel angry or if you lack insight as to how others perceive you when you are angry, seek God’s wisdom and understanding.

*“If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver and search for it
as for hidden treasure, then you will understand
the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth
come knowledge and understanding.”*
(PROVERBS 2:3–6)

Appropriate actions express your thoughts and feelings with restraint, understanding, and concern for the other person’s welfare.

*“The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint,
and whoever has understanding is even-tempered.”*
(PROVERBS 17:27)

Inappropriate reactions express your thoughts and feelings in ways that stir up anger in others and produce strife. The book of Proverbs paints this graphic picture:

*“As churning cream produces butter,
and as twisting the nose produces blood,
so stirring up anger produces strife.”*
(PROVERBS 30:33)

To help assess whether you act in or react to anger, answer the following questions by placing a check mark (✓) beside those that are true of you:

Appropriate Actions

- Do you use tactful, compassionate words?
- Do you see the other person’s point of view?
- Do you want to help the one who angers you?
- Do you focus on your own faults?

- Do you have realistic expectations?
- Do you have a flexible and cooperative attitude?
- Do you forgive personal injustices?
- Do you act in a gracious way, trusting God with the outcome?
- Do you trust God to exercise justice according to His timing?

Inappropriate Reactions

- Do you use tactless, condemning words?
- Do you see only your point of view?
- Do you want to punish the one who angers you?
- Do you focus only on the faults of others?
- Do you have unrealistic expectations?
- Do you have a rigid and uncooperative attitude?
- Do you have difficulty forgiving injustices?
- Do you manipulate or intimidate to control the outcome?
- Do you insist on justice according to your timing? Even though a situation may evoke anger, you can respond appropriately with God's help.

*“As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”*

(COLOSSIANS 3:12)

Anger and the Mind

Question: “How does anger affect our ability to think?”

Answer: The Bible gives numerous examples of how our emotions can affect our body. David says, “*Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief*” (Psalm 31:9). David’s grief affected his whole being—mind, body, and spirit. Likewise, anger can affect our whole being.

When a person is angry, they often display physical signs (clenched fist, crossed arms, etc.). What is unseen is how anger affects the mind. Anger often clouds judgment and hinders problem-solving skills. When we’re angry, we typically have a narrow focus on the problem or person causing our anger because anger triggers our “fight or flight” response. When this happens, the prefrontal cortex (where problem-solving and reasoning skills take place) is inhibited.¹²

That’s why it’s helpful to take a break when you’re angry—it allows you to calm down and start thinking clearly again.

The Bible shows that following God’s commands (like the command in James 1:19 to be slow to anger) can be beneficial to our health.

*“My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.
Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
for they are life to those who find them
and health to one’s whole body.”*
(PROVERBS 4:20–22)



CAUSES



*“Anger can . . . intensify.
Coming out of nowhere,
it warrants a close
examination of the cause.”*



Fear Ignites Anger

Imagine leading thousands of people through the desert. They look to you for their physical and spiritual needs. While setting up camp at the base of a mountain, God calls you to climb the mountain and meet with Him. He intends to give you the Ten Commandments and other beneficial laws.

As you meet with God, the people God has instructed you to lead turn their hearts away from Him. They melt their gold, mold a golden calf, and worship this false idol. God then interrupts your meeting to inform you that the people have turned against Him.

Full of fear, Moses reacts in anger. He is afraid God's righteous anger against his disobedient people will result in their destruction. Moses then rushes down the mountain to confront them.

*“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.”*

(EXODUS 32:19)

What Are the Four Sources of Anger?

A roaring fire can be started and fueled by a number of sources: lightning strikes, volcanoes, unattended campfires, or even something as small as a cigarette that isn't put out. In a similar way, anger is typically started and fueled by at least one of four sources: hurt, injustice, fear, or frustration. Anger is a secondary response to one or more of these four roots.

Probing into buried feelings from your past can be painful. Therefore, it might seem easier to stay angry rather than uncover the cause of your anger, let go of your “right” to be angry, and grow in maturity. When you are seeking to uproot problematic anger, you must persevere.

*“Let perseverance finish its work
so that you may be mature
and complete, not lacking anything.”*

(JAMES 1:4)

1. Hurt: Your heart is wounded.¹³

Everyone has a God-given inner need for *unconditional love*.¹⁴ When you experience rejection or emotional pain of any kind, anger can become a protective wall keeping people, pain, and *hurt* away.

Biblical Example: The Sons of Jacob

Joseph was the undisputed favorite among Jacob’s sons. Feeling hurt and rejected by their father, the 10 older sons became angry and vindictive toward their younger brother.

“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 an ornate 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).

2. Injustice: Your right is violated.¹⁵

Everyone has 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 you love), you may feel angry. If you hold on to the offense, the unresolved anger can begin to take root in your heart.

Biblical Example: King Saul

King Saul’s *unjust* treatment of David evoked Jonathan’s anger. Jonathan, son of Saul, heard his own father pronounce a death sentence on his dear friend, David.

“‘Why should he be put to death? What has he done?’ Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him [Jonathan]. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger” (1 SAMUEL 20:32–34).

3. Fear: Your future is threatened.¹⁶

Everyone is created with a God-given inner need for *security*.¹⁷ 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. (Read 1 Samuel 18:5–15, 28–29.) He felt threatened by David’s popularity and *feared* losing the kingdom.

“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 departed from Saul” (1 SAMUEL 18:8, 12).

4. Frustration: Your performance is not accepted.¹⁸

Everyone has an inner need for *significance*.¹⁹ 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. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. . . . Now Cain said to his brother Abel, ‘Let’s go out to the field.’ While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him” (GENESIS 4:3–5, 8).

Inappropriate Anger

Question: “What should I do with my inappropriate anger?”

Answer: Examine the true source of your anger. Is it *hurt*, *injustice*, *fear*, *frustration*, or a combination? Then evaluate whether you are using anger to try to get your inner need for love, for significance, or for security met.

Have you been **hurt** by rejection or someone’s unkind words? If so, evaluate:

- *Am I using anger* to try to intimidate or coerce someone to remain in a relationship with me?

Have you been a victim of an **unjust** situation where you felt powerless? If so, evaluate:

- *Am I using angry*, accusatory words to cause someone to feel guilty and obligated to me?

Have you been **afraid** because of a situation you couldn’t control? If so, evaluate:

- *Am I using anger* to overpower and control someone in order to get my way?

Have you been **frustrated** because of unmet expectations? If so, evaluate:

- *Am I using angry* threats and shaming words to manipulate someone to meet my demands?

In searching your heart, decide that you will not use anger in an attempt to to satisfy your inner needs. Instead, repent and no longer look to others to meet your needs. Look to the Lord to meet your needs.

*“The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*

(ISAIAH 58:11)

What Causes a Sudden Increase in Anger Intensity?

When most people envision a raging inferno, they imagine a wild forest fire or large buildings engulfed in flames. But in 1999, an entirely different kind of fire broke out in North Delta, Canada. A roaring fire filled 250,000 cubic yards in a landfill. The fire was caused by tons upon tons of loosely piled waste that created a 50-foot column—deposited in a way that violated two important permit requirements.

The local fire department responded to the North Delta landfill fire with several pumper trucks that worked around the clock for 24 hours to put out the fire—*or so they thought*.

The firefighters had extinguished the flames on only the top layer of the landfill. However, embers were still burning beneath the surface. When a sinkhole developed, the embers were exposed. The original piles of waste were reignited, and the fire intensified.²⁰

Likewise, anger can also intensify. Coming out of nowhere, it warrants a close examination of the cause.

*“This is what the LORD Almighty says:
‘Give careful thought to your ways.’”*
(HAGGAI 1:7)

Although a person’s ways of expressing anger may change slightly over time, they seldom change dramatically. When a major change occurs, there is usually a major cause.

If someone is uncharacteristically impatient, irritable, or provoked, be aware that *changes in mood and behavior can result from:*

- **Certain illnesses or diseases** (brain tumor, brain cancer)
- **Chemical deficiencies** (hormonal imbalances)
- **Drug abuse** (steroids, cocaine)
- **Emotional trauma** (betrayal, infidelity)
- **Head injury** (sports, fall, car accident)
- **Life transitions** (moving, parenting, divorce)
- **Losses** (job, relationship, death of a loved one)
- **Medications** (certain antidepressants, smoking cessation drugs)
- **Physical stress** (fatigue, sleep problems)
- **Spiritual struggles** (rebellion, wounded by the church, losing faith in God)

Sudden changes in behavior could have a number of causes. When addressing anger issues, be discerning about the possible causes.

*“Let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance.”*
(PROVERBS 1:5)

Why Do Expectations Lead to Anger?

When it comes to anger, *unrealistic expectations* can be harmful—much like trying to stomp out a fire. You might extinguish the fire, but you might also get hurt. In battling the Canadian landfill blaze, any expectation of quickly extinguishing the fire proved futile.²¹

How easy to adopt unrealistic expectations—to live under the illusion that we can anticipate what people *should* do or how situations *should* be. “My plan is *this*; therefore, people should do *that*.” We often pray and *expect* God to do everything we ask, when in reality He alone is in charge.

The primary problem with unrealistic expectations centers around one word—pride. We would be wise to ask the Lord, “Do I act as though I am the center of my world and everything revolves around me?” The Bible describes angry reactions resulting from prideful desires.

*“What causes fights and quarrels among you?
Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?
You desire but do not have, so you kill.
You covet but you cannot get what you want,
so 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 shows favor to the humble.’”*

(JAMES 4:1–3, 6)

Unrealistic Expectations

Anger toward circumstances

“I expected good things to come my way, but it seems like there’s always a problem in my life.”

Anger toward others

“I expected you to be there for me, but now I feel alone.”

Anger toward yourself

“I expected to always excel, but now I am struggling and feel like a failure.”

Anger toward God

“I expected God to protect me from pain and provide for me but He hasn’t answered my prayers.”

The more we expect God and people to do what we want, the angrier we can become when they seem to fail us. The more we try to control others, the more control we give them in our lives. The more demands we put on others, *the more power we give them* to anger us. Instead, we need to humble ourselves and submit to God’s sovereignty over our lives and over the lives of others.

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

“Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.”

(PSALM 62:5)

Anger over Unrealistic Expectations

Question: “I was told that all I had to do was name and claim what I wanted since the Bible says, *‘Ask and you will receive.’* But what I believed and expected to receive clearly hasn’t happened! I’m angry with God. Why hasn’t He answered my prayers?”

Answer: Your anger at God is based on *unrealistic expectations*. While you were completely sincere, those who taught you this expectation were sincerely wrong. The “Name It and Claim It” theology is not biblical.

When you look at the *whole counsel of God*—reading all scriptures on the same subject in their accurate context—you will see that the “believe and receive” doctrine is not biblically sound.

Consider the apostle Paul, whose credentials were impressive. Yet he knew what it was to lack health and wealth. Although living in the will of God, he was also weak and in need.

*“I know what it is to be in need,
and I know what it is to have plenty.
I have learned the secret of being content
in any and every situation,
whether well fed or hungry,
whether living in plenty or in want.
I can do all this through him
who gives me strength.”
(PHILIPPIANS 4:12–13)*

Jesus tells us that whatever we ask in faith, we will receive: *“I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”* (Mark 11:24). At face value, this verse appears to back up the belief that God will give us whatever we ask for—as long as we believe, we will receive it. Yet the Bible gives us qualification: If your desire conforms to God’s will, He will look on your request with favor and allow it to come to pass. The Bible says . . .

*“If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.
And . . . we know that we have what we asked of him”
(1 JOHN 5:14–15).*

What Is the Root Cause of Anger?

The root cause of extended anger is typically based on a wrong premise about rights. When we feel that our real or perceived “rights” have been violated, we can easily respond with anger.²² But what are our legitimate rights? One person would answer, “Happiness.” Another would say, “Freedom to live life my way.”

Yet this was not the mind-set of Jesus—He yielded His rights to His heavenly Father. If we want to be Christlike and not be controlled by anger, we need to yield 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 submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.”*

(PROVERBS 3:5–6)

3 Inner Needs

We all have three inner needs: the needs for love, significance, and security.²³

Love—to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (JOHN 15:12).

Significance—to know that our lives have meaning and purpose

“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me”
(PSALM 57:2 ESV).

Security—to feel accepted and a sense of belonging

“Whoever fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge” (PROVERBS 14:26).

The Ultimate Need-Meeter

What do our inner needs reveal about us and our relationship with God?

God did not create any person or position or any amount of power or possessions to meet our deepest needs. People fail us and self-effort also fails to meet our deepest needs. If a person or thing could meet all our needs, we wouldn't need God! Our inner needs draw us into a deeper dependence on Christ and remind us that only God can satisfy the longings of our hearts. The Lord brings people and circumstances into our lives as an extension of His care, but ultimately only He can satisfy all the needs of our hearts. The Bible says . . .

*“The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.”*
(ISAIAH 58:11)

All along, the Lord planned to meet our deepest needs for . . .

Love—*“I [the Lord] have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness”* (JEREMIAH 31:3).

Significance—*“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).

Security—*“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged”* (DEUTERONOMY 31:8).

Our needs for love, significance, and security can be legitimately met in Christ Jesus! Philippians 4:19 makes it plain, *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*

WRONG BELIEF:

“Based on what I believe is fair, I have the right to be angry about the disappointments in my life. I have the right to express my anger in whatever way I choose and to stay angry as long I want.”

RIGHT BELIEF:

“Since I have trusted Christ with my life and have yielded my rights to Him, I choose not to be controlled by anger. My human disappointments are now God’s appointments to increase my faith and develop His character in me.” The Bible says . . .

*“Now for a little while you may have had to
suffer grief in all kinds of trials.
These have come so that the proven
genuineness of your faith—
of greater worth than gold, which perishes
even though refined by fire
—may result in praise, glory and honor
when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*
(1 PETER 1:6–7)

What Is God’s Plan for Your Life?

No one wants to live with out-of-control anger. Yet some will say, “I’ve really tried to control my anger, but for some reason, I just can’t.”

If that someone is you, it could be that the Lord wants you to know that you can’t—but He can. He can help you control your anger. His supernatural power can be at work in your weakness. Give Him control of your life and let Him change you from the inside out.

*“See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.”*
(ISAIAH 43:19)

Do you want to experience real change? If so, there are four truths you need to know in order to have a changed life.

4 Points of God's Plan

1. God's Purpose for You: *Salvation*

- What was God's motivation in sending Jesus Christ to earth? To express His love for you by saving you! The Bible says, *"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (JOHN 3:16–17).
- What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth? To forgive your sins, to empower you to have victory over sin, and to enable you to live a fulfilled life! Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (JOHN 10:10).

2. The Problem: *Sin*

- What exactly is sin? Sin is living independently of God's standard—knowing what is wrong and doing it anyway—also knowing what is right and choosing not to do it. The apostle Paul said, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway"* (ROMANS 7:18–19 NLT).
- What is the major consequence of sin? Spiritual death, eternal separation from God. The Bible says, *"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God"* (ISAIAH 59:2). Scripture also says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (ROMANS 6:23).

3. God's Provision for You: *The Savior*

- Can anything remove the penalty for sin? Yes! Jesus died on the cross to personally pay the penalty for your sins. The Bible says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (ROMANS 5:8).

- What is the solution to being separated from God? Belief in (entrusting your life to) Jesus Christ as the only way to God the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (JOHN 14:6). The Bible says, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”* (ACTS 16:31).

4. Your Part: *Surrender*

- Give Christ control of your life, entrusting yourself to Him. Jesus said, *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?”* (MATTHEW 16:24–26).
- Place your faith in (rely on) Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior and reject your “good works” as a means of earning God’s approval. The Bible says, *“It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (EPHESIANS 2:8–9).

Has there been a time in your life when you know you’ve humbled your heart and received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—giving Him control of your life? You can tell God that you want to surrender your life to Christ in a simple, heartfelt prayer like this:

“God, I want a real relationship with you.
I admit that many times I’ve chosen to go my own way
instead of your way.
Please forgive me for my sins.
Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross
to pay the penalty for my sins.
Come into my life to be my Lord and my Savior.
Change me from the inside out and make me the person
you created me to be.
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”

What Can You Now Expect?

When you surrender your life to Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit who empowers you to live a life pleasing to God. The Bible says, *“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life . . .”* (2 Peter 1:3). Jesus assures those who believe with these words:

*“Truly I tell you, whoever hears my word
and believes him who sent me
has eternal life and will not be judged
but has crossed over from death to life.”*

(JOHN 5:24)



STEPS TO SOLUTION



*“As a powerful emotion,
anger can be a weapon of
abuse or a motivator for
appropriate action.”*



Frustration Ignites Anger

On this hot, dry day, Moses's frustration reaches a boiling point. He has led more than a million of his people through the vast desert. But for all of his efforts, they continually complain—criticizing his leadership and condemning him for their plight: *“If only we had died when our brothers fell dead . . . Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place?”* (Numbers 20:3, 5).

Now once again, they have no water. Earlier in their journey, God miraculously provides water by instructing Moses to strike a particular rock with his staff. When Moses obeys, a stream of water—enough for all of Israel—pours out of the rock. (See Exodus 17:1–6.)

At this point, God intends to perform a similar miracle, but He tells Moses to simply speak to—not to strike—a certain rock. However, Moses is so frustrated with the people that his anger boils over. Rather than speaking to the rock, he forcefully strikes the rock—not once, but twice. Gushing water is what God intended—not gushing anger. As a result, God disciplines Moses by not allowing him to lead His chosen people into the Promised Land. (See Numbers 20:1–12.)

Are you ever like Moses? Do you ever allow injustice, hurt, fear, or frustration to make you furious? Do you experience painful repercussions for your angry behavior? If so, what should you do when you get angry? The Bible says . . .

*“Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.”*

(PSALM 37:8)

Key Verses to Memorize

Firefighters know the danger of letting a flame get out of control. They are trained to respond quickly. You must also respond quickly to control the flame of anger before it consumes your life and destroys your relationships. The Bible says . . .

*“Everyone should be quick to listen,
slow to speak and slow to become angry,
because human anger does not produce
the righteousness that God desires.”*

(JAMES 1:19–20)

Key Passage to Read

Ephesians 4:26–27, 29–32

*“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.”*

God's Analysis of Anger

Anger is appropriate at certain times	v. 26
Anger must be directly and promptly controlled so it doesn't lead to a sinful response	v. 26
Anger , if not stopped, can be used by Satan	v. 27
Anger can lead to corrupt, unwholesome, degrading talk	v. 29
Anger can grieve the Holy Spirit.....	v. 30
Anger becomes sin when it results in bitterness.....	v. 31
Anger must be eradicated before it turns into rage	v. 31
Anger must be forfeited before it leads to fighting	v. 31
Anger must be stopped before it becomes slander	v. 31
Anger must be mastered before it becomes malicious	v. 31
Anger can be conquered through compassion	v. 32
Anger can be forsaken through forgiveness	v. 32

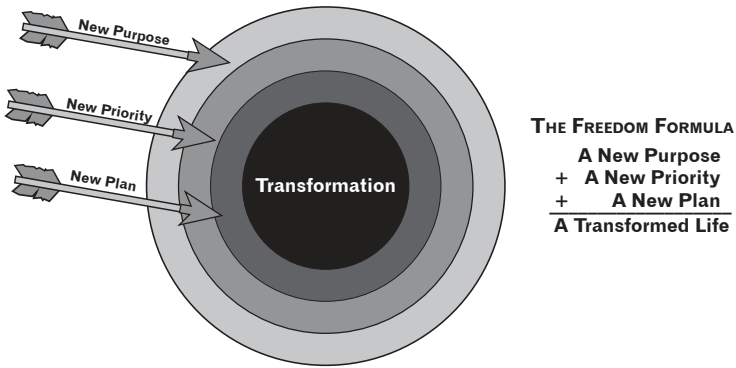
How to Have a Transformed Life

As a powerful emotion, anger can be a weapon of abuse or a motivator for appropriate action. In our own strength, we struggle to control our anger. We are unable to allow anger to accomplish its proper purpose. But through Christ, we can control our anger and harness it as God intended—for helpful use rather than harmful abuse. The Bible says . . .

*“No weapon forged against you will prevail,
and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
and this is their vindication from me,’ declares the LORD.”*

(ISAIAH 54:17)

Reaching the Target: Transformation!



Target #1—A New Purpose

God's purpose for me is to be conformed to the character of Christ.

"Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son" (ROMANS 8:29).

— "I'll do whatever it takes to be conformed to the character of Christ."

Target #2—A New Priority

God's priority for me is to change my thinking.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (ROMANS 12:2).

— "I'll do whatever it takes to line up my thinking with God's thinking."

Target #3—A New Plan

God's plan for me is to rely on Christ's strength, not my strength, to be all He created me to be.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (PHILIPPIANS 4:13 NKJV).

— "I'll do whatever it takes to fulfill His plan in His strength."

My Personalized Plan

As I seek to control my anger, I will:

Believe that God can help me

- I will trust God, knowing that He is in control of my life.
- I will read God’s Word to find guidance on anger.

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you” (PSALM 32:8).

Respond to upsetting situations appropriately

- I will ask God for peace and wisdom to respond to difficult or unexpected situations.
- I will take time to collect my thoughts before I respond.

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (JAMES 1:19).

Watch my words carefully

- I will remember that God wants my words to be uplifting and encouraging.
- I will guard my mouth when tempted to lash out in anger.

“Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips” (PSALM 141:3).

Be accountable to God and others

- I will write out my thoughts when I’m angry, telling God what I’m feeling about the situation.
- I will seek the support of others and talk to friends or a counselor to help me deal with my anger.

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed” (ECCLESIASTES 4:9 NLT).

Give thanks in every situation

- I will remember God’s blessings in my life.
- I will write out a list of things I’m grateful for when I’m upset and thank God for them.

“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”
(1 THESSALONIANS 5:18).

Forgive and seek forgiveness

- I will ask those hurt by my anger for forgiveness.
- I will forgive those who have angered me, remembering that God has forgiven me of all my sins and does not treat me with anger.

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (COLOSSIANS 3:13).

How to Measure the Amount of Your Anger

Before firefighters respond to any alarm, they measure the intensity of the emergency and then rally the necessary resources. A one-alarm fire is considered the least serious, usually dispatching to the scene two pumper trucks, a rescue unit, a ladder truck, and a supervising chief. A two-alarm fire doubles the response of a one-alarm call.

In situations considered three-alarm to five-alarm fires, besides adding more of the above, trucks storing oxygen and area lighting are also sent to the scene, along with a crew for media relations and food and water replenishments for firefighters.

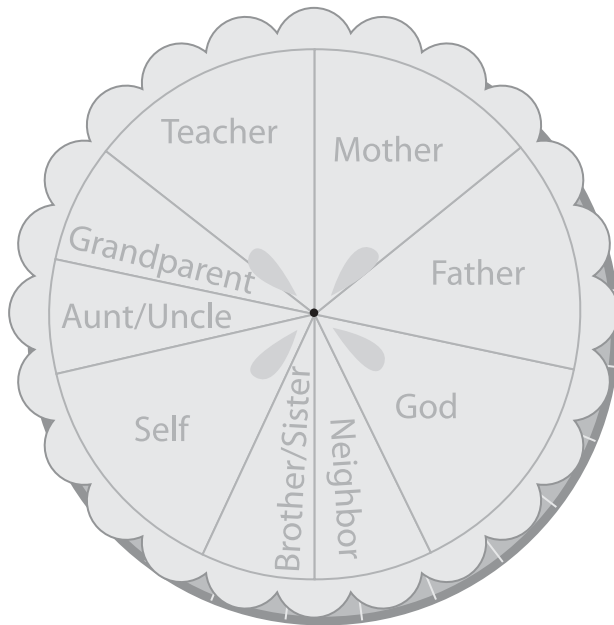
Similar to the standard procedure of firefighters, taking the time to measure your anger is necessary for knowing how to put the fire out.

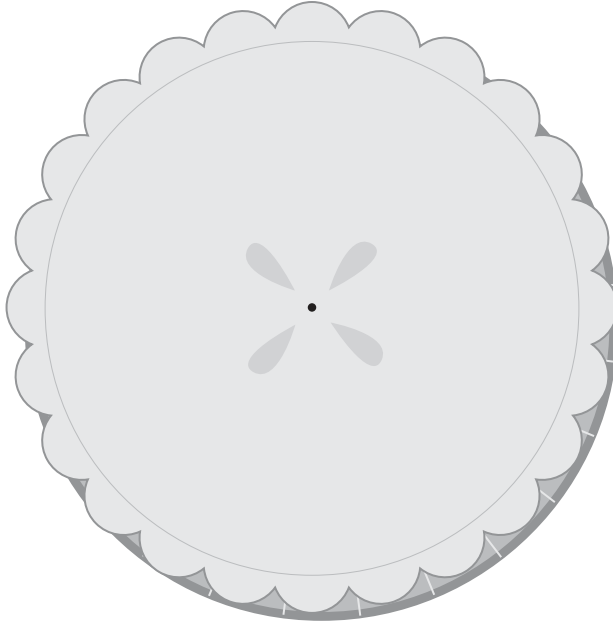
Have you seriously thought about *how much* anger you are holding inside your heart and *toward whom* you feel angry?

*"This is what the LORD Almighty says:
'Give careful thought to your ways.'"*
(HAGGAI 1:5)

The following graphic can help you measure your anger. In the first example, the size of each section (or slice) identifies how much anger is directed at each person or area of life. Use the second graphic to identify the amount of anger *you* feel toward different people and situations in your life. Divide the pie and put a specific name inside each slice to represent the amount of anger you feel toward different people in your life (past or present).²⁴

THE ANGER PIE





How to Analyze Your Anger

Fire investigators have the responsibility of analyzing the aftermath of a fire to determine where the fire started, what started it, and why it burned out of control. The goal is to formulate a plan to prevent such fires from getting started in the future and how best to control them should they break out again. Likewise, analyzing your anger will help you determine where it started, what started it, and why it got out of control. This will help you know how to prevent it and how to control it should it break out again.

To better understand your anger, stop and ask yourself key thought-provoking questions each time you feel angry.²⁵ Analyzing your thoughts and actions can help you move from being controlled by your anger to restraining it and ultimately benefiting from it. As you practice patience and gain understanding, you will be able to use your anger for God's purpose. This, in turn, will prevent foolish displays of anger you later regret.

*“Whoever is patient has great understanding,
but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.”*

(PROVERBS 14:29)

The Anger Quiz

As you consider each question, reflect for a moment and answer honestly.

What triggers your anger? _____

How do you generally express your anger? _____

What do you desire when you are angry? _____

Is the way you express your anger working for you? Do you get what you desire? _____

Do you ever lose control when you are angry? If so, what happens? _____

Are you able to calm your anger? If so, what do you do? _____

Have you allowed your anger to escalate? If so, what happened? _____

Is your anger harming your relationships? If so, how? _____

Has your anger ever caused any health problems? If so, what? _____

Do others point out your anger even if you don't see it? If so, when, and what do they say? _____

Does your anger ever become physical? If so, how and how often?

How safe do you feel when you get angry? _____

Did anyone in your childhood home have an anger problem? If so, who, and how were you impacted? _____

As a child, how did you feel when you were on the receiving end of someone's anger? _____

Could anger from childhood still be impacting you today? If so, how?

Do you have difficulty forgiving those toward whom you have anger? If so, explain. _____

Do you have someone wise to talk with about your anger? _____

Do you ever pray about your anger? If so, what do you pray? _____

What is your view of God during times when you experience anger?

How do you respond to God when you feel angry? _____

How do you respond to others when you feel angry? _____

What can you learn from a recent situation in which you felt angry?
How will this help you better handle your anger in the future?

When you honestly analyze your anger, you are taking the first step toward controlling your anger rather than letting your anger control you.

*“Better a patient person than a warrior,
one with self-control than one who takes a city.”*

(PROVERBS 16:32)

How to Resolve Your Anger toward God

Have you ever blamed 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 struggled to understand why God allowed so much pain in his life. We can hear his anger in his bitter complaint: *“Even today my complaint is bitter; his [God’s] 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).

But is anger toward God justifiable? While He understands our anger, notice how He answers Job: *“Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? . . . Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?”* (Job 38:2; 40:2).

God asks Job a series of questions about creation and the natural world: *“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. . . . Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this”* (Job 38:4, 18). The point of these questions is to show Job that he is finite. He is limited in his perspective, knowledge, and understanding. When Job later repents, he says, *“Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know”* (Job 42:3).

Like Job, we are all finite and limited. We often fail to see how God is using our trials and suffering for good. Instead of running to God, we run away or shake our fist at Him. But God is not surprised by our anger or other difficult emotions. He wants us to come to Him no matter what we’re dealing with and no matter what we are feeling. When we are angry, it is an opportunity to trust God and pour our hearts out to Him.

*“Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”*
(PSALM 62:8)

Resolving Anger toward God

What is the answer to intense anger against God? Can it be resolved? If so, how? The sure way to resolve your anger toward God is to gain a better understanding of the character, purposes, and plan of God.

Know God’s character.

— He is just.

“He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (DEUTERONOMY 32:4).

— His ways are just.

“Just and true are your ways, King of the nations” (REVELATION 15:3).

- He is love.

“God is love” (1 JOHN 4:8).

- He loves.

“We love because he first loved us” (1 JOHN 4:19).

Know God’s purposes.

- He brings good out of evil.

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (ROMANS 8:28).

- He turns your sorrow into joy.

“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (PSALM 30:11).

- He uses your suffering to produce perseverance, character, and hope.

“We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts” (ROMANS 5:3–5).

- He uses your troubles to teach you 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 receive from God” (2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4).

Know God’s plan.

- God will grant eternal life to you and to all who entrust their lives to Christ.

“My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day” (JOHN 6:40).

- God will bless you as you persevere under trial.

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial” (JAMES 1:12).

- God will bring His righteous judgment on those who are evil.

“The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment” (2 PETER 2:9).

— God will, one day, make everything new for those who trust in Him.

“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell 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).

Anger Because God Allows Evil

Question: “I’m angry at God for allowing bad people to cause so much pain and suffering. Since God had the power to create the world, why doesn’t He stop evil?”

Answer: God allows people to exercise free will. God did not create us to be robots. He created us to have choice over what we think, say, and do. Because of that, some people choose evil over good.

If you have read the last chapter of the book of Revelation, you know that God has appointed a time in the future when He will put an end to evil and suffering. Until then, evil will always be in opposition to good, causing harm and destruction. But God can use our painful experiences to accomplish His purposes. He did so in the life of Joseph, whose evil brothers sold him into slavery. Years later, the frightened brothers came face-to-face with him. By then, Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt and had saved both the Egyptians and the Hebrews from famine. Joseph said to his brothers . . .

*“Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?
You intended to harm me,
but God intended it for good to accomplish
what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*
(GENESIS 50:19–20)

How to Resolve Your Past Anger

Most people have seen images of people walking on hot coals. They appear to defy nature by taking a short, yet potentially scorching, journey with bare feet unscathed. The trick to salvaging the soles is to move fast, never lingering long enough for skin to burn. If for some reason the treacherous trek is prolonged, pain and injury will ensue.

Failure to resolve past anger operates in much the same way. The longer it resides in your heart, the more painful it is for you and others. That's because unresolved anger produces bitterness. And bitterness is like a bed of coals that burns deep wounds into your soul and ruins your relationships. God wants you to resolve your anger and remove bitterness from your heart.

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger,
brawling and slander,
along with every form of malice.”*

(EPHESIANS 4:31)

Putting Away Past Anger

Realize your unresolved anger.

- Admit you have harbored anger in your heart and confess it as sin.
- Ask God to reveal all your unresolved anger.
- Admit to a wise, nonjudgmental friend or counselor that you have buried anger.
- Ask God to help you see your sin as He sees your sin.

Say to the Lord . . .

“I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin” (PSALM 38:18).

Revisit your root feelings.

- Did you feel hurt: rejected, betrayed, unloved, ignored?

- Did you experience injustice: cheated, wronged, maligned, attacked?
- Did you feel fearful: threatened, insecure, out of control, powerless?
- Did you feel frustrated: inadequate, inferior, hindered, controlled?

Pray to the Lord . . .

“Search me, 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 for you personally.

- Personalize Bible verses that reveal God’s love for you:

Lord, thank You for saying to me, *“I have loved you with an everlasting love”* (Jeremiah 31:3).

God, *“Because of [Your] great love [I am] not consumed, for [Your] compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness”* (LAMENTATIONS 3:22–23).

- Read this passage daily:

“I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (ROMANS 8:38–39 NLT).

- Rely on the Lord to meet your inner needs for love, significance, and security:²⁶

Lord, *“I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation”* (PSALM 13:5).

- Thank God each day for His unconditional love:

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 JOHN 3:1).

Pray . . .

“. . . that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (EPHESIANS 3:17–19).

Recognize your need to forgive.

- Make a list of each of your hurts—release each one to God.
- Pray for those who persecute you—for whatever is broken in them.
- Give your desire for revenge to God—do not strike back or retaliate.
- Release those who have hurt you into the hands of God—forgive as God forgave you!

Be faithful to . . .

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you” (COLOSSIANS 3:13).

Release your rights regarding the offense.

- Release your right to hear “I’m sorry” for the offense.
- Release your right to dwell on the offense.
- Release your right to “get even” regarding the offense.
- Release your right to keep bringing up the offense.

Remember . . .

“Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends” (PROVERBS 17:9).

Rejoice in God’s purpose for allowing your pain.

- Thank God for the ways He will use this trial in your life for your good.
- Thank God for how He will use your resolved anger for the good of others.
- Thank God for His promise to restore you after a time of suffering.
- Thank God for His promise to use all the pain to make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

Give thanks that . . .

“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 PETER 5:10).

Reflect Christ's love.

Reflect the love of Jesus by praying for every person who hurts or angers you.

- “Lord, may my heart be a reflection of your heart.”
- “Lord, may my mind be an expression of your mind.”
- “Lord, may my will be an illustration of your will.”
- “Lord, may my love be a demonstration of your love.”

Jesus said . . .

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (JOHN 13:34–35).

Restore the relationship when appropriate.

Remember that sometimes reconciliation may not be appropriate, such as in cases of abuse or between people involved in an adulterous affair or other destructive relationships.

An important first step is to understand the differences between reconciliation and forgiveness.²⁷ Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness focuses on the offense; whereas, reconciliation focuses on the relationship. Forgiveness does not require a relationship. However, for reconciliation to occur, two people must walk together in agreement toward the same goal. The Bible says, *“Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”* (Amos 3:3).

- **Forgiveness** can be given by one person.
Reconciliation requires at least two people.
- **Forgiveness** is extended in one direction.
Reconciliation is reciprocal . . . involving a two-way direction.
- **Forgiveness** is a decision to release the offender.
Reconciliation is the effort to rejoin the offender.
- **Forgiveness** involves a change in thinking about the offender.
Reconciliation involves a change in behavior by the offender.

- **Forgiveness** is a free gift to the one who has broken trust.
Reconciliation is a restored relationship based on restored trust.
- **Forgiveness** is extended even if it is never, ever earned.
Reconciliation is offered to the offender because it has been earned.
- **Forgiveness** is unconditional, regardless of a lack of repentance.
Reconciliation is conditional and is based on repentance.

After understanding these differences, talk with a trusted pastor or counselor to help you determine whether reconciliation is advisable in your situation. Realize, you can forgive your offender, but you should not reconcile with someone who refuses to change. The Bible says, “*Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered*” (Proverbs 22:24).

If reconciliation is appropriate in your case, do so safely with appropriate boundaries, taking these next steps:

- **Confess your anger** both to God and to the person with whom you have resisted or have not wanted reconciliation.
Write out the confession first to get the wording just right.
“I realize I’ve been wrong in holding on to my anger and refusing to allow God to restore our relationship. I’m deeply sorry. Will you forgive me?”
- **Keep the encounter free of anger** and accusatory statements.
Instead of “You did _____” statements, use “I felt (sad, hurt, devastated, etc.) when (event) happened.”
- **State your desire** for reconciliation within a renewed, right relationship.
“I sincerely want us to have the best relationship possible—a healthy, supportive, positive relationship that is right in God’s sight. Is that what you desire?”

Jesus said . . .

“I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. . . . Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift” (MATTHEW 5:22–24).

Reconciliation can help you resolve past anger and lead to healing. That is God’s desire. However, reconciliation is not always possible if the other person is unwilling to change. The Bible says . . .

*“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you,
live at peace with everyone.”*

(ROMANS 12:18)

How to Rid Yourself of Childhood Anger

Have you ever been burned? Most everyone has a story about playing with fire as a child or accidentally touching a hot stove and feeling the sting of a burn. If you’ve been burned, you know the instant reaction of shouting in pain and quickly searching for cold water or ice to cool it down. Some burns are mild, last only a moment, and heal quickly. Others can leave a scar that lasts a lifetime.

Likewise, the causes of our emotional scars often start in childhood and last for years. The experiences of a five-year-old boy can affect him as a 50-year-old man. How we respond to the hurts, injustices, fears, and frustrations we experience now may mirror similar experiences from childhood.

We must recognize our pain from the past and resolve it. Thankfully, the Lord offers healing.

*“Heal me, LORD, and I will be healed;
save me and I will be saved,
for you are the one I praise.”*

(JEREMIAH 17:14)

Resolving Childhood Anger

If you’ve been excessively angry at someone and you don’t understand why, the root of your anger may reside in an unresolved childhood experience. Uncovering issues from childhood can help you get at the root of what causes your anger today. These questions can help you identify pain from the past that can trigger present anger.

Ask yourself:

— “How am I feeling now?”

- ♦ **Hurt:** “Someone I’m close to says hurtful things about me. I feel rejected.”
- ♦ **Injustice:** “I’m being mistreated (belittled, bullied, ridiculed).”
- ♦ **Fear:** “I’m afraid of losing my job and don’t know how I will support my family.”
- ♦ **Frustration:** “I have too many responsibilities and no one to help me.”

— “Did I ever have these same feelings when I was a child?”

- ♦ **Hurt:** “Yes. My parents ignored me and favored my brother.”
- ♦ **Injustice:** “Yes. My father abused my mother, my sister, and me.”
- ♦ **Fear:** “Yes. My parents argued with each other all the time.”
- ♦ **Frustration:** “Yes. My parents expected me to be perfect.”

— “How did I feel when that happened?”

- ♦ **Hurt:** “I felt sad and rejected.”
- ♦ **Injustice:** “I felt powerless to stop it.”
- ♦ **Fear:** “I was afraid my parents would divorce and I would lose one of them.”
- ♦ **Frustration:** “I always felt insecure because they only accepted me when I was good.”

- “How did I express my anger?”
 - ♦ **Hurt:** “I picked on my brother and was mean to him.”
 - ♦ **Injustice:** “I bullied other kids.”
 - ♦ **Fear:** “I hid in my room and bottled up my feelings.”
 - ♦ **Frustration:** “I took on too much and always strived to be perfect at everything (school, sports, work).”

Face the anger still residing in your heart.

- Ask God to reveal buried anger from your childhood.
- Ask close family members and friends to describe what situations seem to make you angry.
- Acknowledge that your prolonged, unresolved anger over the past is unhealthy, even if you think it is justified.
- Take personal responsibility to overcome your childhood anger.
- Surrender your painful childhood experiences and angry feelings to God.
- Forgive and pray for those who have angered you.
- Ask forgiveness from those whom you have offended.
- Pray for God to change you and to fill you with His unconditional love for others.

Resolving childhood anger is difficult, but there is hope. God can redeem the past with His love.

*“Put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD
is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.”*

(PSALM 130:7)

How to Apply the Quick Answer to Anger

First responders know the importance of having a “quick answer.” In the face of calamity, firefighters must provide a quick response while remaining cool under pressure.

When you're angry, it's vital that you learn to respond quickly. If not, your anger could escalate. The possibility of out-of-control anger remains ever-present. A spark of irritation can be ignited *intentionally* by hurtful people or even *unintentionally* by those who love you. God wants you to seek His answer for anger quickly before it harms your relationships.

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

(PROVERBS 15:1)

The Quick Answer to Anger

The effort to resolve anger can be reduced to two basic steps. These two steps involve one question and one action response.

Step 1. Ask: Can I change this situation?

Step 2. Action: If you can, change it. If you can't, release it.

Let's go back to the first step: Think of a situation that angers you. Can you change it? Answer *Yes* or *No*—that's it.

Now consider the second step: If you answered *Yes*, you are angry about something you can change—so change it.

If the door squeaks, oil it.

If the faucet leaks, fix it.

If you answered *No*, you are angry about something you cannot change—so release it. How do you release your anger? First, list what angers you—every person, every situation. Then, humbly go to God, reject any thought of revenge, and surrender the situation and yourself to the Lord. Although you may feel powerless, in reality you have the power to release your pain and anger to Him.

Prayer to Release Your Anger

“Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me.
Thank you for caring about me.
Since you know everything,
you know the strong sense of
(hurt, injustice, fear, and/or frustration)
I have felt about (name or situation).
Thank you for understanding my anger.
Right now, I release all of my anger to you.
I trust you with my future.
In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.”

*“Cast all your anxiety on him
because he cares for you.”*

(1 PETER 5:7)

How to Alleviate Your Present Anger

A firefighter’s job is not finished until all the flames are extinguished. Having a quick answer to anger is helpful in a variety of situations, but a more thorough plan can help fully extinguish the effects of anger in your life. Unless it is alleviated, anger ignites quarrels and strife. Proverbs tells us . . .

*“As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.”*

(PROVERBS 26:21)

Alleviate Your Anger

Like a firefighter's hose spraying water on a fire, working through the following steps can do much to douse the potentially dangerous effects of anger in your life.

Acknowledge your anger.

- Be aware of when you feel angry.
- Be willing to admit you have anger.
- Be mindful of how you suppress or repress your anger.
- Be willing to take responsibility for any inappropriate anger.

Realize, *"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy"* (PROVERBS 28:13).

Ascertain your style.

- How often do you feel angry? (Often? Sometimes? Seldom? Never?)
- How do you know when you are angry?
- How do others know when you are angry?
- How do you express your anger? (Do you explode or withdraw? Do you criticize, use sarcasm, or get defensive? Do you dwell on an offense? Do you slam doors, hit, scream, yell? Do you curse, cry, or make jokes?)

As you seek to identify the way you express your anger, pray, *"Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind"* (PSALM 26:2).

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 the unjust actions of someone toward you or another person?
- **Fear:** Is the source of your anger fear due to a recent or anticipated loss?
- **Frustration:** Is the source of your anger frustration over blocked plans, hopes, or dreams?

Commit to total honesty before God: *"I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity"* (1 CHRONICLES 29:17).

Appraise your thinking.

- Are you expecting others to meet your standards?
 - ♦ “She should take better care of her children.”
 - ♦ “He ought to notice what I do for him.”
 - ♦ “She needs to be here on time.”
 - ♦ “He should do a better job”
- Are you guilty of distorted thinking?
 - ♦ Exaggerating the situation
 - ♦ Assuming the worst
 - ♦ Labeling one action based on other actions
 - ♦ Generalizing by saying, “you never” or “you always”
- Are you believing lies?
 - ♦ “God is punishing me for my past.”
 - ♦ “I don’t deserve to be loved or successful.”
 - ♦ “My future depends on my ability to keep this job.”
 - ♦ “God isn’t really interested in whether or not I’m fulfilled.”
- Are you blaming God or others?
 - ♦ “This situation is someone else’s fault, not mine.”
 - ♦ “He is responsible for this mess.”
 - ♦ “She let this happen.”
 - ♦ “God let me down.”

Remember, *“The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright give thought to their ways”* (PROVERBS 21:29).

Admit your needs.²⁸

- Do you use manipulative anger in an attempt to feel loved?
- Do you use explosive anger, insisting on certain conditions in order to feel significant?
- Do you use controlling anger to demand your way so that you feel secure?
- Do you know that only Christ can ultimately meet all of your inner needs for love, significance, and security?

Rest assured, *“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus”* (PHILIPPIANS 4:19).

Abandon your demands.

Instead of demanding that others meet your inner needs for love, significance, and security, learn to look to the Lord to meet your needs.²⁹

- Look to the Lord to meet your need for love.

“Lord, though I would like to feel more love from others, I know you love me unconditionally, and You will love me forever.”

“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (JEREMIAH 31:3).

- Look to the Lord to meet your need for significance.

“Lord, though I would like to feel more significant to those around me, I know I am significant in your eyes.”

“‘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).

- Look to the Lord to meet your need for security.

“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 mere mortals do to me?” (PSALM 118:6).

- Look to the Lord to meet all of your needs for life and godliness.

“Lord, though I wish others would be more responsive to my needs, I know you have promised to meet all of my needs.”

“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 PETER 1:3).

Constantly remind yourself . . . *“God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”* (2 CORINTHIANS 9:8).

Address your anger.

- Determine whether your anger is really justified.

- ♦ *Has a wrong* been committed?
- ♦ *Has anyone suffered* hurt or injury?
- ♦ *Has an injustice* occurred?

Consider, *“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways’”* (HAGGAI 1:5).

- Decide on an appropriate response.
 - How important is the issue?
 - Would a good purpose be served if I mention it?
 - Should I acknowledge my anger only to the Lord?

Remember, *“There is . . . a time to be silent and a time to speak”* (ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 7).

- Depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance.
 - Ask for counsel about your anger.
 - Ask for insight about your anger.
 - Ask for wisdom about your anger.

Be confident about the role of the Holy Spirit in your life: *“The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all the truth”* (JOHN 16:13).

- Develop constructive dialogue if you need to confront an offender.
 - Don’t speak rashly with a heart of unforgiveness.
Do think carefully before you speak.
 - Don’t use “you” phrases such as: “How could you?” or “Why can’t you?”
Do use personal statements such as “I feel . . .” or “I need . . .”
 - Don’t bring up past grievances.
Do stay focused on the present issue.
 - Don’t assume 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 a gentle tone of voice.

“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone” (PROVERBS 25:15).

Alter your attitudes. (Read Philippians 2:2–8.)

- Have the goal to be like-minded with Christ.
“Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.” v. 2
- Do not think of yourself first.
“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” v. 3

- Give the other person preferential treatment.
“Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,” v. 3
- Consider the interests of the other person.
*“... not looking to your own interests, but each of you
to the interests of the others.”* v. 4
- Strive for the same mind-set as Christ.
“... have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus:” v. 5
- Do not emphasize your position or rights.
*“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality
with God something to be used to his own advantage;”* v. 6
- Look for ways to serve with a servant’s heart.
*“... rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very
nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”* v. 7
- Speak and act with a humble spirit.
*“And being found in appearance as a man, he
humbled himself . . .”* v. 8
- Obey the Word of God, and submit your will to His will.
“... by becoming obedient . . .” v. 8
- Be willing to die to your own desires.
“... to death—even death on a cross!” v. 8

Anger and Regaining Trust

Question: “How can I regain the trust of my wife after I’ve blamed her for provoking my anger?”

Answer: She needs to hear you take full responsibility for your wrong choices and to hear how your wrong choices are going to become right choices.

- Tell her you were totally wrong for reacting to her in anger. Admit your harshness is entirely your fault.

- Confess your harshness as selfishness and an attempt to control her.
- Ask if she would be willing to forgive you. (This may take time, so do not be demanding of her.)
- Demonstrate the depth of your remorse by resolving to change. (Promises and tears won't build trust, but actions will.) Develop a plan to act differently when you are angry.
- Share your plan with her and then *be consistent* in carrying it out.

The way to gain trust is to prove, over time, that you are trustworthy. You need to demonstrate change not just when the relationship is easy, but when it is hard. Consistency is the key.

Responding without any harshness may, over time, change her heart and help you regain her trust.

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them."

(COLOSSIANS 3:19)

How to Communicate Your Anger to Another

Learning how to convey anger appropriately will better help you put out the fires in your relationships.

Before communicating your anger toward someone, take time to evaluate whether addressing it is necessary and appropriate—and whether you think it will prove beneficial. Some people simply do not know how to handle anger directed toward them. They become either hostile and defensive or weak and placating. Neither response solves anything. In fact, the result can be as if someone has pumped oxygen into your anger, inflaming it all the more.

If you merely want to vent your feelings and release some pent-up steam, then pour out your heart to God, but not to the person with whom you are angry. The Bible says . . .

*“Fools give full vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end.”*

(PROVERBS 29:11)

Choose to be proactive.

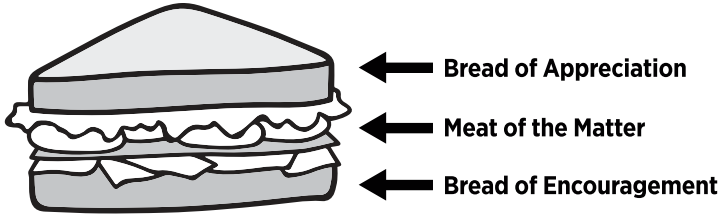
- Examine your motivation.
- Know what you want to accomplish. Be realistic in your expectations.
- Assess the legitimacy of your request.
- Rehearse how you will approach the subject.
- Anticipate possible reactions from the other person.
- Think through how you might respond to those reactions.
- Decide whether you are willing to live with any negative repercussions.
- Talk with a wise and trusted person if you are uncertain what to do.

Choose a time and place to talk.

- Select a mutually convenient time and place in an atmosphere conducive for listening and sharing.
- Meet on “neutral turf” so that both of you are likely to feel equal.
- Allow sufficient time to address your concerns and the concerns of the other person.
- Commit the time to God and seek His wisdom.

Choose to communicate your desires for open and honest communication and resolution.

- Express your pain and anger in a loving, non-accusatory way without criticizing the person’s character. Consider using the “Sandwich Technique.”



- ♦ Express appreciation.
 - ♦ Discuss the core issue and desired outcome.
 - ♦ Determine a course of action to resolve the matter.
 - ♦ Conclude with confident encouragement to move forward.
- Evaluate the willingness of the other person to receive your concerns without becoming angry or defensive. Are they willing to understand your hurt, fear, frustration, or indignation over an injustice?
 - Give opportunity for a response without interruption or defensiveness on your part.
 - Affirm what is being said by repeating and clarifying spoken statements.
 - Request any desired changes in behavior that you believe will help resolve the present problem and help prevent future problems.
 - Agree to change any problematic behavior on your part. Ask for forgiveness.
 - Be fair and objective, open and optimistic.
 - Extend total forgiveness.
 - Value differences in goals, desires, and priorities.
 - Thank them for their willingness to listen to you, to resolve the problem, and to work toward improving your relationship.

The Bible gives this instruction . . .

*“Pursue the things which make for peace
and the building up of one another.”*

(ROMANS 14:19 NASB)

How to Answer Questions about Anger

The well-equipped firefighter depends on tools for every rescue attempt. Ropes, ladders, axes, and saws can mean the difference between *life* and *death*. Firefighters are thoroughly trained in rescue operations. They know what tools are needed in each situation to help others.

Likewise, you have tools to help others deal with their anger. God will not only use your experiences with anger to accomplish His purposes for you, but He will also put you in a position to offer help and hope to others. The questions below will help you prepare to give biblical answers to those struggling with anger.

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

(1 PETER 3:15)

Anger and Confrontation

Question: “I need to confront someone but I’m angry. I’m afraid I’ll lose my temper. What can I do to prepare myself?”

Answer: Talk with God about the situation. Tell Him honestly how you feel. *“Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall”* (PSALM 55:22 NLT).

Reflect on God’s character. When you remember that God does not treat you with anger, it can soften your heart toward the other person and help you not lash out in anger. *“The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love”* (Psalm 145:8).

Realize that God has given you power through the Holy Spirit to control your anger. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* (GALATIANS 5:22–23 ESV).

Pray that the Lord will guard your mouth as you confront the other person. *“Take control of what I say, O LORD, and guard my lips”* (PSALM 141:3 NLT).

Anger and Self-Control

Question: “What should I do when I feel my anger getting out of control?”

Answer: When you feel irrational and unbridled behavior take the place of reason and self-control, put on the brakes and take a time-out. Unless you do something to intervene in the process, the direction of the conversation is not likely to change but will probably escalate.

Stop and take a deep breath.

- *Hold up your hands* to indicate you are “surrendering” for the time being and that you want to diffuse the situation.
- *State slowly in a low tone* that either you are getting too upset to think clearly or that the conversation is not going in a positive direction and does not seem to be resolving anything.
- *Explain* you need time to calm down. Then take a short walk if needed. Go to a quiet place to listen to music, pray, or do whatever helps you regain your composure.
- *Agree on a time* to resume the conversation once you have regained your composure and have processed what has been said.

If you reach an impasse where agreement is not possible:

- *Agree to disagree* and have different opinions on the subject. Refuse to let those differences become a problem in the relationship. (Remember, if two people agree on everything all the time, their relationship runs the high risk of becoming stagnant and void of growth.)
- *Commit to valuing*, accepting, and respecting each other as you grow in your understanding of one another.

“Show proper respect to everyone.”

(1 PETER 2:17)

Anger and Threats of Violence

Question: “One of my coworkers has threatened to harm me. What should I do?”

Answer: Some angry people lose control of their anger and cause property damage and/or personal physical harm. In extreme cases, anger has led to murder. This is why you must:

Always take all threats of violence seriously.

- Assume if someone makes a threat, the person intends to carry it out.
- Consult your company’s policy manual regarding the Code of Conduct. Request training in workplace safety from your Human Resources department.
- Develop a proactive plan to defuse the situation.

Always report any threat.

- Report the threat to your supervisor and to your Human Resources department.
- Report the threat to a security officer.

- Report the threat to the police if you feel threatened or if you believe that your life is in danger.

Always proceed wisely and cautiously when threatened.

- Remove yourself from the situation and allow the authorities to take proper action.
- Don't handle the situation alone. Ask for a security escort when walking to your car.
- Establish boundaries. Talk with your supervisor and Human Resources department about measures to protect yourself and ensure that you are safe.

Remember, “*A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions*” (Proverbs 22:3 NLT).

Anger and Road Rage

Question: “How can I overcome road rage? I get so angry at other drivers!”

Answer: Almost every driver has experienced someone cutting in front of them, yelling profanity, or making obscene gestures. The moment you feel agitated, relax and concentrate on driving safely. Remember,

“I don't have to respond in anger. God doesn't want me to lose control over a temporary annoyance.”

“I refuse to become emotional in response to the out-of-control emotional outbursts of others. Lord, I surrender my emotions to you.”

“I will praise God because He is in control, and I can remain calm and rational.”

“Lord, it is obvious this person is experiencing difficulties in their life right now. May my response reflect your grace. I pray you will make your presence known to them.”

“Lord, I thank you for the gift of your peace.”

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
since as members of one body you were
called to peace. And be thankful.”*

(COLOSSIANS 3:15)

Anger and Forgiveness

Question: “I was severely wronged by someone I once trusted. I know God wants me to forgive, but how can I ignore my anger and let this person off the hook? How can I trust them again?”

Answer: Forgiveness is different than trust. Forgiveness is given; trust is earned. God calls you to forgive everyone, but not to trust everyone. Extending forgiveness is based on your choice to be obedient to God and to release your anger to Him. Extending trust is based on another person’s trustworthiness, which is proven over time.

Holding on to anger and unforgiveness usually hurts you more than the other person. Forgiveness is not letting the other person “off the hook.”

To help you understand the process of forgiveness, consider this illustration:

Picture a meat hook hanging around your neck and lying against your chest. Attached to the end of it is a burlap bag containing rocks representing every pain this person has caused you.

Ask yourself, “Do I really want to carry that heavy burden everywhere I go for the rest of my life?”

The Lord wants you to take the anger and pain from the past and release it into His hands. Take the one who offended you off of your “emotional hook” and place your offender onto His hook.

Remember, the Lord knows how to deal with your offender in His time and in His way. God says, *“It is mine to avenge; I will repay”* (Romans 12:19).

Pray the following prayer to release your offender to God.

Forgiveness Prayer

“Lord Jesus, thank you for caring about how much my heart has been hurt.
You know the pain I have felt because of (list every offense).
Right now I release all that pain into your hands.
Thank you, Jesus, for dying on the cross for me and extending your forgiveness to me.
As an act of my will, I choose to forgive (name).
Right now, I move (name) off of my emotional hook and onto your hook.
I refuse all thoughts of revenge.
I trust that in your time and in your way you will deal with my offender as you see fit.
And Lord, thank you for giving me your power to forgive so that I can be set free.
In your holy name I pray. Amen.”



SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE



*“First seek the counsel
of the LORD.”*

(1 KINGS 22:5)



God's Word offers the hope and promise of a changed life. The Lord will renew your mind—transforming the way you think, act, and live—as you saturate yourself in His Word. In the following questions, the bold-faced words serve as prompts to help you more easily memorize the verses related to this topic. May God's truth come alive to you, flourish in you, and flow through you.

Why should I be **slow to become angry**?

*“Everyone should be quick to listen,
slow to speak and **slow to become angry**,
because human anger does not produce
the righteousness that God desires.”*

(JAMES 1:19–20)

What does an **angry, hot-tempered person** do?

*“**An angry** person stirs up conflict,
and a **hot-tempered** person commits many sins.”*

(PROVERBS 29:22)

Regarding **rage**, what do **fools** do in comparison to **the wise**?

*“**Fools** give full vent to their **rage**,
but **the wise** bring calm in the end.”*

(PROVERBS 29:11)

When does **anger give the devil a foothold** in my life?

*“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)

How does the Bible compare the actions of a **hot-tempered person** and **one who is patient**?

*“A **hot-tempered person** stirs up conflict,
but the **one who is patient** calms a quarrel.”*

(PROVERBS 15:18)

Why should you **not be “quickly provoked in your spirit”**?

*“Do **not be quickly provoked in your spirit**,
for anger resides in the lap of fools.”*

(ECCLESIASTES 7:9)

How does the Bible contrast a **gentle answer** and a **harsh word**?

*“A **gentle answer** turns away wrath,
but a **harsh word** stirs up anger.”*

(PROVERBS 15:1)

With whom should I **not associate** or **make friends**?

*“Do not **make friends** with a hot-tempered person,
do not **associate** with one easily angered.”*

(PROVERBS 22:24)

Why shouldn't I **rescue a hot-tempered person**?

*“A **hot-tempered person** must pay the penalty;
rescue them, and you will have to do it again.”*

(PROVERBS 19:19)

How can I **be angry** and yet **not sin**?

*“**Be angry**, and do **not sin**; ponder in
your hearts on your beds, and be silent.”*

(PSALM 4:4 ESV)

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