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# Introduction

Anger is rampant. Like a monster, it is destroying individuals, families, and churches. Unresolved anger breeds more anger and often leads to violence and destruction. Many are terrorized by it. Others are in bondage to it. The harder you try to control it, the more often it erupts. Anger, left unchecked, is sure to grow.

While anger itself is not evil, unresolved anger is not part of God's design for man. God tells us to put anger off, to put it behind us (Ezek. 45:9, Eph. 4:31–32), and to walk in His righteousness. God would not command us to do that if He didn't provide the means to accomplish it. Unfortunately, few gain freedom from their anger.

Anger is like a dandelion. As a weed, it is unwanted. Left unchecked its seeds are carried far and wide, propagating consequences far beyond the source. The seeds of the dandelion sail through the air, landing on unsuspecting soil. Soon, unsightly plants spring forth in lawns, flower beds, and even in the cracks of concrete sidewalks.

Dandelions are difficult to get rid of because their roots extend deep into the soil. It is almost impossible to pull up a dandelion without leaving some of the root in the ground—which will then grow a new plant. You must dig to get to the end of the long taproot, which extends deep into the ground.

Anger and dandelions are similar in the way they spread, but their roots are very different. Dandelion roots are distinctly “dandelion.” Unlike the dandelion, the roots of anger are often deep, but they are many—like the roots of a tree—and are not distinctly “anger.” Consequently, they are not usually easily identified. People try desperately to pull up the root of anger, but they find themselves still angry because they don't successfully identify the roots.

Pulling up anger is much more difficult than pulling up a dandelion root, because anger grows from many roots. These roots have many

identities, including guilt, pride, bitterness, selfishness, fear, desire for control, and many more. In order to rid ourselves of anger, each root that has become deeply anchored in our lives needs to be correctly identified and uprooted.

If our lives are plagued with anger, we need a sure solution—one that will last. The best place to find lasting solutions for problems in our lives is in the Word of God. In *Uprooting Anger: Destroying the Monster Within*, Bible passages that deal with anger are considered in order to identify the roots from which anger grows. Meditations on various verses of Scripture explore truths from God to help us understand what He has to say. In order to fully attack the root that is revealed, with each meditation study pages are included to help make personal application of each truth.

We've heard and gained hope from this verse: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Why, then, do many of us—even though we know the truth—not walk in the freedom that is available to us? Later in the passage, Jesus tells us why: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed [those entrusted with God's Word]; but ye seek to kill me, *because my word hath no place in you*" (John 8:38, italics added). When we know the truth (His Word), but it has no place in us, we are not set free by it. We must apply the truth to our lives, taking it into ourselves. We'll be set free only as completely as the truth is applied in our lives. *Uprooting Anger* will help reveal God's truths concerning anger and will serve as a tool to help us apply those truths to our lives.

I began this study as I sought answers for families whom we were counseling. I was devastated as I saw great destruction in numerous Christian homes—destruction caused by anger. I began to search the Scriptures to find God's answer for victory over anger. I hoped for a quick-fix, one-size-fits-all formula that would bring freedom from the terror and destruction I saw, but the more I looked, the more frustrated I became.

I discovered that the Bible has much to say about anger, but I couldn't find a formula that was common to all the passages. After much frustration, I read just one passage at a time and asked God to speak to me out

of His Word. He did, and I was excited about what I learned. I wrote down what He showed me and studied to understand more. The next day I had a similar experience from another passage. And the next day another.

Before I knew it, I had a stack of meditations. I still didn't have the quick-fix solution that I'd hoped for. Instead, I saw that anger doesn't have a simple solution—because it has many roots, and each must be dealt with.

We are often frustrated because we take care of one root and hope that our problem is solved. We don't realize that there are other roots which are continuing to provide nourishment that keeps our anger alive and healthy. When attacking anger, we need to work diligently to “lay aside *every* weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1b–2a, italics added). We need to persevere, running with patience as we continue pulling up those roots that would cause us to stumble. Without patience and perseverance we will not complete the journey. However, the key to success is to look to Jesus, because He is the author and the finisher of our faith. It is in Him that we can be made into new creatures.

As I looked for answers for others, I quickly realized that I had a problem too. As I had compared my anger to the volatile explosions of some, I had self-righteously concluded that I didn't have a problem because I wasn't as bad as they were. I was maybe more controlled, didn't blow up as loudly or as frequently, and was better at justifying my anger—but my problem was as real as that of those whom I was seeking to help. I also discovered that it wasn't as hidden as I thought it was. Others knew I had a problem with anger whether I knew it or not. I am grateful for this study. God has used it for my own personal growth, not only in overcoming my anger, but also in making me much less judgmental of others who get angry.

I know that God is working in your life, or you wouldn't be reading this book. My prayer is that this would be a tool that God would use to help you uproot anger and to help you grow in your relationship with Him. May the Lord give you grace, strength, and perseverance for the journey.





# 1 He Is Sufficient!

*“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor [loud, noisy expressions], and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice”* (Ephesians 4:29, 31).

**Read** 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.

God makes it clear that He does not want any expression of anger left in our lives. He wants it all gone, all put away. We are to be without it.

- \* Bitterness (which grows from anger that is taken inward and held) needs to be put away.
- \* Wrath (the passion that grips) needs to be put away.
- \* Anger (the thought and passion that would seek vengeance) needs to be put away.
- \* Clamor (the outward expression of anger) needs to be put away.
- \* Evil speaking (the railing and seeking to tear another down) needs to be put away.
- \* All malice (the evil, wicked thoughts that develop in our hearts and minds when we are angry) needs to be put away.

This could seem overwhelming to anyone who has unsuccessfully battled with anger. However, the Lord gives us hope by telling us that His grace is sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9), and all things are possible through Him (Matt. 19:26, Lk. 18:27). He would not ask this of us if it were something that couldn't happen.

The key is to remember that it is His grace that is sufficient. It is through Him that all things are possible. If we keep our hopes on ourselves and our own efforts, we are doomed. Only as we look to Him for our salvation do we find His grace sufficient.



# He Is Sufficient!

*“And He has said to me,  
‘My grace is sufficient for  
you, for power is perfected  
in weakness.’*

*Most gladly, therefore,  
I will rather boast about  
my weaknesses, that the  
power of Christ may dwell in  
me”*

(2 Corinthians 12:9, NASB).

Sometimes after an episode with anger we pray and ask God to free us from it; then we are disappointed in God for not answering our prayer. If we run to Him only in the crisis, only when we have a need, we will never fully tap into the grace that is available.

Our God is a relational God, not a problem solver on call. We grow in grace and strength through an intimate relationship with Him.

Jesus faced the ultimate abuse, and He never lost His temper or spoke a word in His own defense. He was one with His Father and often slipped away for time alone with Him. His strength is available to us. His grace is sufficient. The question is, Are we sufficiently related with Him?

**Pray:** Confess to the Lord times of depending on your own strength and of seeking God only during the crises. Praise Him for His example of strength under control at Calvary, and tell Him you desire a closer relationship with Him. Ask Him to change your heart and draw you near to Himself.

# 1 He Is Sufficient!

Application of Ephesians 4:31

*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31).*

**Read** John 15:4–5.

1. What life does the branch have apart from the vine?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What has to happen for the branch to not receive life and strength from the vine? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. When (how often, for how long, etc.) is the branch attached to the vine?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How is the branch truly one with the vine? \_\_\_\_\_

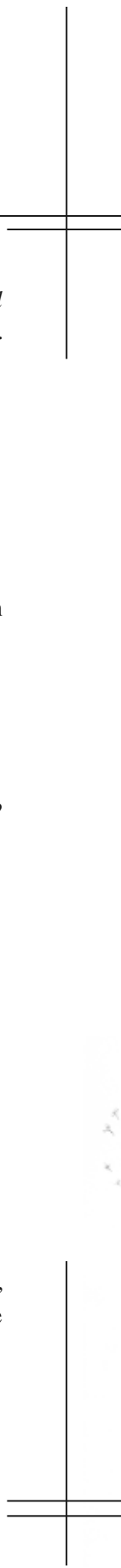
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5. What identity does the branch have apart from the vine?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. If the branch has to be attached to the vine, stay attached to the vine, and receive its life from the vine, what does that say about your life in Jesus Christ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# He Is Sufficient!

Use each anger event  
as a signal to spend  
time with the Lord  
and draw close  
to Him.

7. What can the branch do (what fruit can it produce?) apart from the vine? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Galatians 5:22–25.**

8. What is the fruit that is produced when we are abiding in the Vine?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Can anger co-exist with any of the fruit listed? Why, or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read Psalm 37:5–6.**

10. What are the two verbs that indicate what action you should take?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. How does the righteousness (the fruit, the conquering of anger) happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When tensions arise and anger erupts, that is a sign that you are no longer abiding in Him.

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**Pray:** Ask God to help you abide in Him and develop a closer relationship with Him.

**Digging Deeper:**

John 17:21–23, 26

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

Revelation 3:20

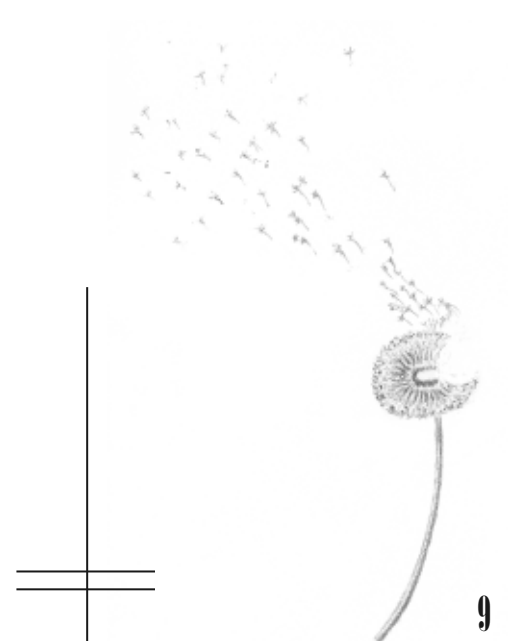
1 Corinthians 7:23–24

Philippians 1:9–11

1 John 1:3–4

1 John 2:28–29

1 Corinthians 1:9





# 2 Jesus Made a Scourge

*“When he [Jesus] had made a scourge [whip] of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables” (John 2:15).*

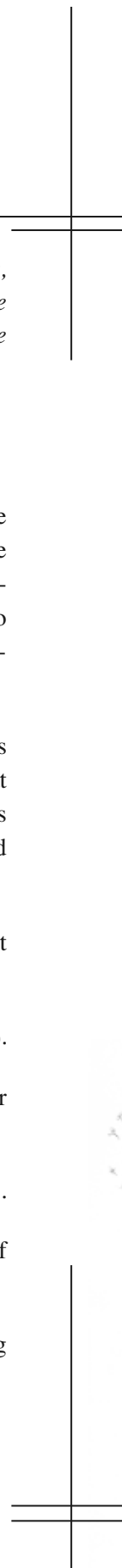
**Read** Matthew 21:12–17.

Jesus is our example. He made a scourge, drove the traders and the livestock out of the temple, poured out the money, and overthrew the tables. For the disciples, it brought to mind Psalm 69:9: “The zeal [jealousy] of thine house hath eaten me up.” Jesus was driven by zeal to what appears to be a response of fury. If Jesus could get angry, it’s permissible for me to get angry. Right? Well, let’s look more closely.

Anger is generally a negative reaction rather than a positive action. It is normally re-active, rather than pro-active. However, Jesus did only what His Father told Him to do (see John 5:19 and 30), so we know that Christ’s demonstration in the temple was not a reaction to the scene that greeted Him. Instead, it was action carried out in response to His Father.

If we are around someone who has an angry outburst, we want to fight back or to run. How did those around Jesus respond?

- \* The disciples were reminded of a verse from Psalms (John 2:17).
- \* The Jews asked for a sign to show what authority He had for doing it (John 2:18).
- \* The blind and lame came to Him for healing (Matthew 21:14).
- \* He taught in the temple the rest of the day, and “the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did.”
- \* The children cried “Hosanna to the son of David,” making the chief priests and scribes indignant (Matthew 21:15).



# Jesus Made a Scourge

No one reacted negatively to the “angry” outburst. The chief priests and scribes were the ones under attack. They questioned His authority, but they then allowed Him to heal and teach in the temple.

Could it be that rather than reacting in anger, Jesus was acting under authority? Wasn't He pro-active (taking the initiative to intervene) rather than re-active (acting in opposition)? Could it be that Jesus was taking dominion—dominion that was rightfully His as the Son of God?

If Jesus had cleansed the temple in reactive anger, would the priests have allowed him to teach in the temple the rest of the day? When we become angry, do we respond to God and act as His representative? Or do we react in opposition to what we don't like?

**Pray:** If you have considered the incident of Jesus in the temple as an excuse to justify anger, repent before God and seek His help for future victory over anger.



# 2 Jesus Made a Scourge

Application of John 2:15

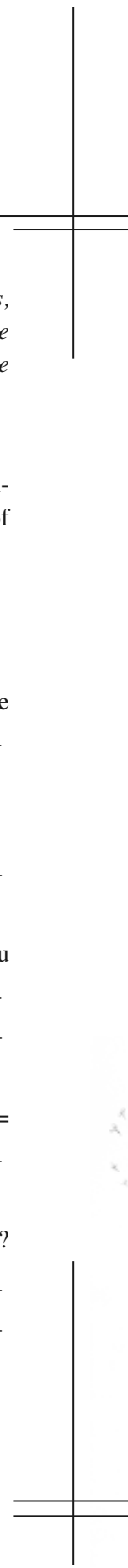
*“When he [Jesus] had made a scourge [whip] of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables” (John 2:15).*

Think of a time that your anger seemed justified. In light of that incident and with careful consideration of the following two passages of Scripture, answer the questions below.

**Read** John 2:17 and Psalm 69:7–9.

1. In Psalm 69, David was sharing his heart with God. For whose sake did he suffer? \_\_\_\_\_
2. For whose sake did Jesus suffer shame, dishonor, and reproach?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you get angry because God has been offended or because you (or those with whom you identify) are offended? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Is your anger a result of zeal for God, or zeal for yourself? (zeal = *qinah* = jealousy, envy)<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
5. How would zeal for God be exhibited differently than zeal for self?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read** John 2:15–19, Matthew 21:12–16, and Mark 11:15–19.



# Jesus Made a Scourge

6. According to the verses you just read, describe the reaction of those who saw Jesus' action of "anger."

Disciples: \_\_\_\_\_

Crowd: \_\_\_\_\_

Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Jewish officials: \_\_\_\_\_

Was any of these responses a normal reaction to anger?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How do people react to you when you are angry? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Was Jesus reacting to what He saw in the temple, or was He obeying His Father? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. When you are angry, do you react or act according to God's guidance (under His authority)? Do you demonstrate the humility of one who is under authority? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Can you justify your anger by comparing it to Jesus' anger as He drove out the money changers? \_\_\_\_\_

**Pray:** Ask God to help you remain under His authority, being pro-active with others rather than reacting in anger. If you have justified your anger, ask God to forgive you.

## Digging Deeper:

Jeremiah 11:19–20

John 5:30

Proverbs 15:33

1 Peter 5:5–7

Isaiah 53:6–7

2 Timothy 1:8–9

# 3 Warning Signs

*“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54).*

**Read** Acts 7:51–60 and Matthew 5:20–22.

(For the whole story, read Acts 6:9–7:60.)

If there is even a little truth in an accusation or confrontation, we usually become angry — and we are probably angry more often than we realize. In order to overcome our anger, we need to recognize its signs. We can gain wisdom from the passage in Acts 7 as we observe the actions of those who were enraged at Stephen.

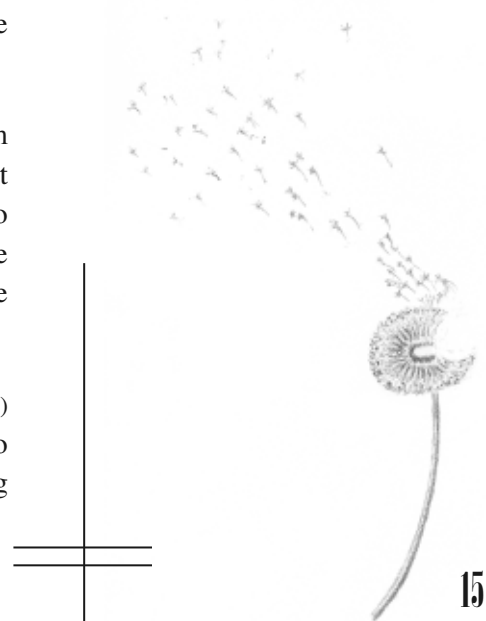
The first sign of the officials’ anger was that they gnashed their teeth; then they cried out with a loud voice. If we would notice when we clench our teeth (tense our muscles), we might be able to catch ourselves before our voices become loud, tense, or harsh.

Next, the officials covered their ears! (v. 57) One sign of anger is no longer being open to hearing what the other person has to say. It becomes impossible to reason with an angry person. The intensity grows, and generally the volume increases as each tries to make himself heard.

Sometimes we become silent and shut down, but we still refuse to listen to the other person. Sullen silence is just as much an expression of anger as yelling is, and it can be just as damaging. Either way, we close our ears to others.

The angry crowd rushed on Stephen “with one accord” and ran him out of the city! (vv. 57–58) When we are angry with others, we may not run them out of the city, but we reject them and close our hearts to them. Like the city officials, we don’t plan to do this. It’s by impulse that our spirits close. In fact, we are unable to be angry with someone and at the same time have an open heart toward him/her.

The final expression of the crowd was to stone Stephen! (vv. 58–59) Once we indulge the full expression of our anger, it is very difficult to regain control. The anger seems to gain a life of its own, growing



stronger and louder. The angrier we get, the less rational we become, leading to actions we later regret.

While we don't generally go so far as to stone others to death, our anger is life-threatening to relationships. According to Jesus, it is likened to murder (Matt. 5:20–22).

**Pray:** Ask God to help you recognize the signs of anger and to be quick to refrain from anger, once you see the signs. Ask Him to show you the roots of your anger and to lead you to freedom.

# 3 Warning Signs

Application of Acts 7:54

*“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54).*

Learning to recognize the signs of anger and the types of things that trigger your anger can help you recognize the anger before it is expressed. As you recognize these signs, you can learn to conquer your angry responses rather than allowing them to conquer you.

1. Listed below are common expressions of anger. Check the ones that you have demonstrated. Underline the ones you demonstrate most often. (Ask for input from your family!)

- Clenched teeth     Not listening     Irritability
- Rapid breathing     Raised voice     Glaring
- Argumentation     Clenched fist     Swearing
- Silent treatment     Impatience     Hurtful words
- High-pitched voice     Harsh, steely voice

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical attack:

- On individuals     On surrounding objects

2. What usually makes you angry?

- Circumstances     Other people     Yourself

3. When do you get angry? (Check the ones that apply.)

- When afraid                       When opposed
- When not heard                   When jealous
- When losing face                 When losing control
- When plans are thwarted
- When authority is questioned
- When facing unknown
- When expectation is not met



# Warning Signs

- \_\_\_ When hurt: ( ) emotionally ( ) physically
- \_\_\_ When a mistake is made: ( ) by others ( ) by yourself
- \_\_\_ Other

4. Anger is often a method of coping. Think about the reasons you get angry. What are you trying to accomplish when you get angry?

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5. Do you really want to conquer your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What will you have to trust into God's hands to be an overcomer?

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7. Will you yield them to Him now? \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** The next lesson is foundational for overcoming anger, and it has an extra section for application. Allow extra time and do not save your homework until the last minute in order to have time to complete the assignment.

**Pray:** Offer to God the things listed in #6.

### Digging Deeper:

Genesis 4:3-9  
James 1:19-20  
Proverbs 14:29  
Proverbs 19:11

Matthew 5:20-22  
Psalm 37:1-9  
Proverbs 16:32  
Proverbs 25:28

# 4 You Choose

*“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27).*

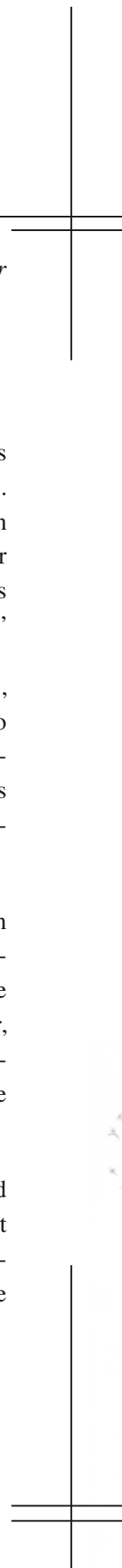
**Read** Psalm 4:1–8.

Is God commanding us to be angry? Many think this verse justifies anger. However, a closer look at the words gives clearer understanding. The verb for *be ye angry* is one word in the Greek, and it is written in the passive tense, having the sense of “when you are exasperated or angered.” The passive tense implies that something is done that makes you angry. “When something happens that makes you angry, don’t sin.”


Paul is acknowledging the fact that we get angry, that it is a natural, human reaction. But he also warns us to not sin, to not let the sun go down on our wrath. It is inevitable; things will happen and we will become angry. However, Paul exhorts us to work through our passions and emotions over things that have been done to us—and to do so before the sun goes down.

As David was fleeing from Absalom, he wrote, “Stand in awe, and sin not” (Ps. 4:4). *Stand in awe* means to tremble or rage with violent emotion, especially from anger or fear! David was being wronged, and he was in danger. He had all the natural factors that lead to raging anger, and yet he wrote, “. . . and sin not.” We know that for David the natural response was to be angry, because as he spoke to his own heart, he counseled himself to be still and quiet. He chose to not be angry.

When we are wronged, our natural response is anger, but that is indeed the natural response, the response of the flesh. God commands us to not sin when we are angered. Rather than justifying our temper or by taking things into our own hands, we have to choose to receive the grace of God to overcome the anger, and to trust God.



# You Choose



**Pray:** Ask God to forgive you for the times you have sinned as a result of anger. (Be specific if God brings specific situations to mind.) Ask God to teach you to deal with your sin of anger and to help you walk in righteousness.



# 4 You Choose

Application of Ephesians 4:26

*“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27).*

## **I. The first step in overcoming anger is to admit that it is sin.**

**Read** Galatians 5:19–21, Colossians 3:8, and Matthew 5:21–22.

1. According to these verses, what is God’s view of anger? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. When you are angry, against whom do you sin? \_\_\_\_\_

3. If the other person is 95% wrong, does that mean you did not sin when you became angry? \_\_\_\_\_

List by name the people with whom you are most often angry:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List the most recent times that you were angry: \_\_\_\_\_

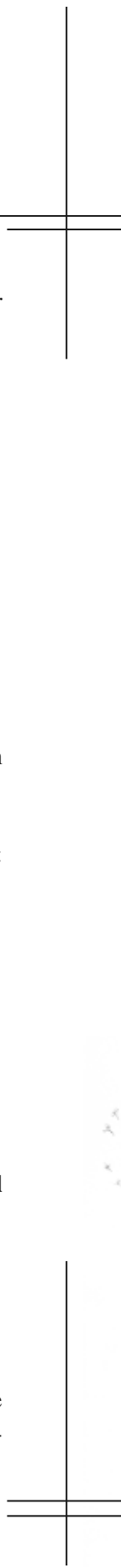
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **II. The second step in overcoming anger is to accept personal responsibility for your angry reactions.**

**Read** Revelation 20:12.

4. What does God hold you accountable for? \_\_\_\_\_

You cannot make the other person repent, but you are held responsible for your own actions, and you can take steps to correct your relationship with God and with others.



**Pray:** Ask God to help you see what your responsibility was when you got angry. How was your heart not pure before Him? (Examples: pride, self-centeredness, greed, expectations)

**Read** Matthew 5:22–24.

(In verse 23, note the placement of the word *therefore*.)

5. If someone has something against you, how does it affect your relationship with him/her? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How does it affect your relationship with God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. What does God instruct you to do about it? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Are you willing to obey God on this matter? (You will find peace only through obedience.) \_\_\_\_\_

9. List (by name) those to whom you have shown anger and have not cleared the offense. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Follow the “Steps to Gain a Clear Conscience” (next page) on how to go and make things right with them.

**Pray:** Ask the Lord for the grace to take personal responsibility and to obey Him in gaining a clear conscience.

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**Digging Deeper:**

Psalm 24:14

Philippians 2:1–4

Hebrews 12:14–15

1 Peter 3:10–12

*“But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5, NASB).*

**Continue the application** of these truths by completing Steps to Gain a Clear Conscience in the exercise below.

## Steps to Gain a Clear Conscience

### I. Confess your sin to God and ask Him to forgive you for your anger.

**Read** 1 John 1:9.

- A. Ask the Lord to help you see where you were wrong.
- B. With God’s help, identify the attitudes of your heart that did not represent God’s attitudes in those situations.
- C. Pray, asking God’s forgiveness where you were wrong.

### II. Forgive the other person for what he did that prompted your anger.

**Read** Matthew 6:14–15.

- A. If the hurt is deep, making it difficult to forgive, read Matthew 18:21–35. (Put yourself in the story and ponder what God has done for you.)
- B. Pray, telling God you forgive that person.

