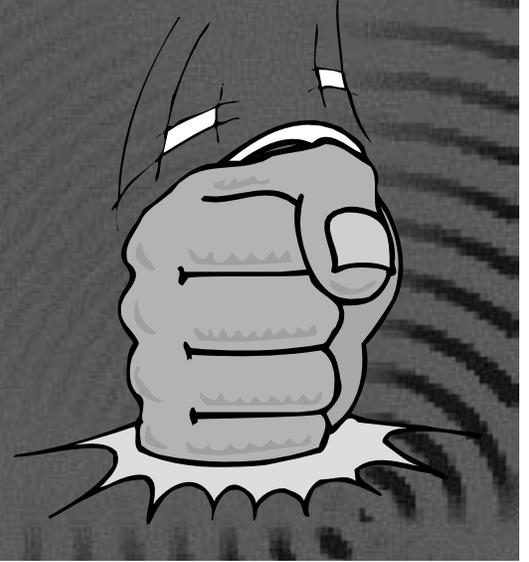


MASTER YOUR

ANGER



Introduction

*My name is Dave, and I am an angry man!
Today, by God's grace, my anger no longer controls me.*

*When I left home to begin my career and marriage, I did not know that I was an angry man. I **did not think it was a problem.** I thought I was in control.*

How foolish I was! *In my anger, I hurt my wife, my children, my friends and myself.*

Then God began teaching me, showing me my heart as He saw it. He helped me to see the causes and consequences of anger. He taught me how to master it, how to truly "put it away," as The Bible tells us to do.

I have recently celebrated the 25th anniversary of the start of my learning path. I now know that mastering anger is a life-long journey. Anger has been a factor in medical conditions for which I may always need treatment. Thank God that He has made this help available to me!

In this booklet, I have tried to distill the lessons I have learned into a few easy-to-read pages. I am doing this for the benefit of my friends whose struggles with anger resemble my own. Especially I am doing it for the men. We men often lack the time and patience to read the books that could help us.

If you have time to read this booklet and find it helpful, please let me know. In this way you can become a part of my Life Story of victory over anger.

-J. David Hertzler

Master Your Anger

Anger may be a good servant, but it is a cruel master.

You are Human!

In some ways you are like God, your Creator.

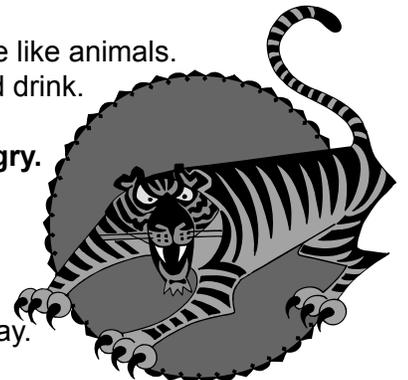
- You can love.
- You can think.
- **You can be angry.**

In other ways you are like animals.

- You can eat and drink.
- You can sleep.
- **You can be angry.**

When you are angry like the animals,

- You can fight.
- You can run away.



When you are angry like God,

- You can take action against evil.
- You can work for justice.

THINK

Has your anger been more animal-like or more God-like lately? Check what you do most often in your anger.

- ___ Fight and abuse people or things
- ___ Avoid people or situations
- ___ Take action to fix what is wrong
- ___ Seek justice for those who have been wronged

What Does Anger Look Like?

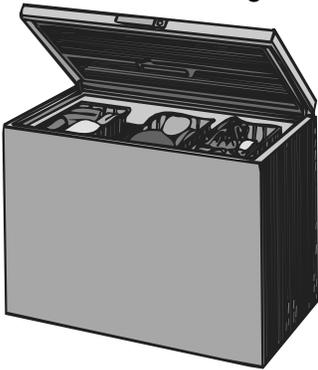
Here are two pictures of anger.

A volcano: Lots of heat, noise and explosions.



- Swearing, name-calling, gossip, trash-talking
- Hitting and damaging things or people
- Being jealous and controlling.
- “Party animal”

A freezer: Stuffing it all inside.



- Carrying grudges
- Keeping other people at a distance
- Overwork, addictions
- Grouchy, withdrawn, depressed

THINK

How does your anger make you act? Draw a picture of it.

How would you like your anger to make you act? Draw a picture of it.

How are you doing so far? Is it uncomfortable to look at yourself? Would you like to look at someone else?

Try this little test. **Who is angry, Ruth or Sam?**

Ruth talks a lot and laughs loudly. When she does not like something or someone, she says so. Sometimes she swears at them. On the job, she tells other people how they should do their work. She left her first husband, she says, because he was “such a bum.” Ruth is a good worker but nobody likes her very much.



Sam never has much to say. He always looks sad. If someone says, “How do you feel?” Sam does not have an answer. He reads a lot and knows a lot, but he does not have many friends. When his wife tries to get him to talk to her, he looks away or turns his back. He would rather stay at work than go home in the evening.



So, who is angry?

Ruth and Sam are both angry. Ruth is the volcano. Sam is the freezer. They both need help. Their anger harms both them and other people.

THINK

Fire and heat and explosions can warm our houses and drive our automobiles. What is wrong with the fire and heat of Ruth’s anger? (**Hint:** Is Ruth in control of her anger? Is Sam in control of his anger?)

Anger is not the real problem

A bigger problem is control.

It is not easy to control anger. Ruth does not control her anger. When she is angry, she works hard and gets things done. At the same time she hurts other people.

When Ruth “lets it all hang out,” does that get rid of the anger? Of course not! When Ruth goes home after work, she still feels angry.

Sam thinks he can control his anger. He tries to keep it all inside. But the anger just won’t stay there. Some of it spills out, no matter how hard Sam tries to keep it in. People see his anger and are afraid of it.

Sam does not want to hurt other people. So, he hurts himself by keeping his anger inside. The anger “kills” his other feelings. Sam feels dead inside. He also seems dead to other people. Who could enjoy being with a dead person? No wonder Sam is sad and lonely!

THINK

Are you saying, “I don’t have an anger problem. I’m not a volcano or a freezer”?

Ephesians 4:25–31 names some actions and feelings that go with anger. Are any of these part of your life?

- Lying, stealing
- Bitterness (bad or poisonous feelings)
- Rage (passion, temper)
- Loud talk (shouting, brawling)
- Hate
- Bad or harmful talk (gossip, insults)

What is an “Anger Problem?”

Be sure you understand: **Anger is not the problem.** The problem is what you do when you are angry. Here is what the Bible says about God’s anger.

“God is angry with the wicked every day”

(Psalm 7:11).

When God is angry, He always does what is right.

“I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness”
(Psalm 7:17).

Look at the list again at the top of the page. Does God ever do these things when He is angry? No. Do you ever do them? That’s the difference between God and us. God never has an “anger problem.” People often do.

Psalm 7:11 tells us **why God gets angry.** People do bad things every day. How do **you** feel when people do bad things? This is how God feels too. **It is not wrong to feel this way.** If you never feel angry about the bad things people do, **something may be wrong with you.**

THINK

What can you do with your anger?

You can **express** it, spill it out like a volcano. This is what Ruth does. This is **wrong.**

You can **suppress** it, shut it up inside like a freezer. This is what Sam does. This is also **wrong.**

Is There a Right Way to Be Angry?

In the Bible, Paul, the great apostle and missionary, says that there is.

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

If it is sin to **express** anger and sin to **suppress** anger (see page 9), what should you do?

“Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another...” (James 5:16 KJV).

This is what Mark tries to do.

When Mark came home, there was Billy’s bike in the driveway, right where he wanted to park the car. Mark held back his anger and moved the wagon. After dinner he took Billy aside and talked to him. “I have told you many times to put your bike away,” he said. “Today you did not obey me. I was sad and angry.”

Now Billy was sad. “Please forgive me, Daddy,” he said.

“I forgive you,” Mark said. “I will also do something to help you obey. I will put the bike in the shed for one week. You will have to play with something else. Now you and I will pray and ask God to help us do what is right.”

This was hard for Billy. He liked his bike very much. But he was glad that his father did what was right with his anger.



Confess Your Anger

Mark has learned to **confess** his anger. This helps him to stay in control and master his anger.

Here are the five steps Mark uses.

- 1. He **calls his anger by its right name.** He doesn’t call it by other names like “righteous indignation” or “telling it like it is.” When he is angry, he admits, “I am angry.”
- 2. He **looks at the cause.** If something is truly wrong, he says so. Sometimes he has selfish desires that make him angry. He admits these too.
- 3. He **tells God** about his anger. He **tells the person** at whom he is angry, if it seems right to do so. He also tells why he is angry.
- 4. He **prays** for help and forgiveness from God and others.



- 5. He **does something** about the cause. If something is wrong, he tries to fix it. If it is a selfish desire, he tries to change it. As he does this, anger becomes his servant rather than his master.

Mark once had a serious anger problem. He started using these five steps every time he got angry. Now he can more often keep his anger from hurting himself and others.

“Get over your anger before the day is finished” (Ephesians 4:26 NLV).

THINK

Try the five steps of confession that Mark uses. Memorize them and practice them every time you feel angry. At first you may feel that you don't have time for these. But as you practice them, you will find that you can do them very quickly. Sometimes all it takes is a brief “time out” with your eyes closed.

But You Don't Know How Much It Hurts!

When you were a child, people sometimes hurt you. They didn't mean to. But people are not perfect. Even if you had a “good” childhood, you still got hurt sometimes.

Now that you are older, people still do things that hurt. You wish the pain would go away, but it doesn't. Maybe that is why you get angry. Anger feels better than pain.

People do lots of things to cover up pain.



When I was a child, I saw how bad alcohol can be. My mom and dad both drank. When my dad got drunk, he beat my mom half to death. She would go to work with her eyes swollen shut. I was full of anger and fear. I said to myself, “I won't drink when I grow up.” But when I was a teen, I began to do the very things I said I would never do.

Adapted from Hope For the Hurting by Howard Jolly.

Pain causes anger. It may be the greatest cause of anger in your life.

- You **lost** a parent or other family member, a friend or pet or prized possession.

- People **neglected** or **abandoned** you or didn't give you what you needed.



- Someone **abused** you, physically, sexually, emotionally or spiritually.

- An **illness** or **injury** left you partially disabled.

- You were **disappointed** when things did not turn out as you hoped.

THINK

Look again at the painful things in the list above.

- Loss
- Neglect or abandonment
- Abuse
- Illness or injury
- Disappointment

Close your eyes after each one and ask, “Did this happen to me? How do I feel about it now?” Are you feeling any anger as you do this?

Feel Anything? Me! Are You Kidding?

“I'm a survivor. Sure, painful stuff happened to me. But I put it behind me, and now everything's cool!”

But you still have an anger problem, right?

Pain doesn't just go away by itself. What did you do to make yourself not feel anything?

Denial? “It was no big deal.” “It happens to everybody.” “It was my fault.” “I never think about it.” “Forgive and forget.”

Medication? Alcohol, drugs (prescription or non-prescription).



Self-discipline?

Exercise, work, yoga, time-out's, New Year's resolutions, join a gang or club.

Pleasure? Sex, TV, food, sports.

Religion? Excessive prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, spiritual “high's.”

THINK

Maybe these practices are blocking your pain. But are they helping you to master your anger?

So What Should I Do With My Pain?

Pain can be your friend. If you touch a hot stove, pain makes you pull away before you get badly burned. If you do get burned, pain tells you not to touch the stove again.

But pain can **feel** like an enemy. It can overwhelm you and make you want to die. You fight it and try to make it go away. When it fights back, you get angry. In your anger you cause more pain for yourself and others.

Jesus knows about pain. His enemies beat him until His back bled. Then they put nails through His hands and feet and hung Him up to die.

Was Jesus angry? The Bible tells us what He did.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:24 NLV).



Did forgiving his enemies make the pain go away? No. He died in agony. Did Jesus ever forget about the pain? No! He took the scars of the nails back to Heaven with Him.

Could Jesus help you forgive those who hurt you and stop being angry at them? Yes, He could. Will He take away your pain? I don't know. Sometimes He does. Other times He lets the pain stay. Whatever He does, He always has a good reason.

One thing is certain: Jesus will **always** help you do what is right. You do not have to give way to anger that makes you sin.



Howard Jolly knows about pain. He shares parts of his story in his book *Hope For the Hurting* (Rising Above, 1996). Here is what he says. "God can heal our wounded hearts. It will take a courageous step of trusting God to overcome the pain of the past and experience healing in the present. Nothing else can bring the comfort, peace, love, joy and purity that we long for, **ONLY GOD**. In order to experience His healing, we must expose our wounds to Him."

THINK

Is your pain causing you to live one of these sinful life styles?

- Tough guy/girl (Nobody will hurt ME!)
- Clown (Life of the party)
- Good guy/girl (People pleaser)
- Weak guy/girl (Take care of me or I'll get sick or go crazy)
- Distant guy/girl (Stay away from me)

What would Jesus want you to do about your life style?

Beneath the Pain, God-given Desires

Think about what you wanted most as a young child.



- ☀ You wanted safety, protection from danger.
- ☀ You wanted to be healthy and well-fed.
- ☀ You wanted to belong, to be accepted by your family and significant others.
- ☀ You wanted to be important and helpful to others, to be admired and praised.
- ☀ You wanted to learn and discover.

Is there anything wrong with these desires? No! God your Creator gave you these desires. He is pleased when these desires are fulfilled.

You expected your parents to fulfill these desires. Did they? Not always. How did you feel? Disappointed? Hurt? **Angry?**

Join the human race. This is our story. So what did you (we) do with your (our) disappointment?

1. **We stopped trusting others** to fulfill our desires. We stopped trusting God.

2. We vowed, "**We must do it ourselves.**" We stopped loving and living for others and began living only for ourselves.

3. We began living out that vow. We began **using** others to meet our goals.

- Self-protection: strong locks, insurance policies, martial arts training.
- Self-fulfillment: living for food, sex, sports, chemical "high's."

- Self-promotion: living for power, wealth, recognition.
4. For a while this plan seemed to work. Then...
- Emptiness (It no longer satisfied us.)
 - Doubt and fear (We didn't even know if we could believe ourselves.)
 - Loneliness (Nobody seemed to really need us.)
 - Depression (No joy left in life.)
 - Despair (No reason to live.)

Then...
more pain, and more disappointment, and more anger. Finally, for some, suicide.

When anger becomes your master, this is where it leads.



Has God abandoned you?

Not at all!

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).

What does God use to fulfill the desires of our heart?

- He uses **His love-letter**, the Bible. It is full of promises, wisdom and truth.
- He uses **His Spirit** of power, love and clear thinking, whom He sends to live within us.
- He uses **His People**, who believe His love-letter and are full of His Spirit.

Don had an anger problem much like Sam's (page 2). A friend showed him truth in the Bible that he had never seen before. He corrected his behaviours, and things got better for a while.

But he soon began to be moody and withdrawn again. Another friend, with the wisdom of God's Spirit, pointed to anger as a possible cause. This was a new thought to

Don. He accepted his friend's counsel and began to deal with his anger. Once again, things were better for a while. Then depression became a problem for Don. Still another friend saw the wounds in Don's heart from childhood abuse. He stayed close to Don, and soon Don learned to love and trust again. His anger and depression lifted, and he became a happy man.



You Can Win!

Anger has the power to make you a slave. It can tie you up and beat you until you want to die.

But a Greater Power has come to your rescue. God waits for your permission to step in and free you from the power of anger. If you let Him, He will do it.

Does this mean you will never get angry again? Certainly not! But when you get angry and do something sinful,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

You won't be perfect, just forgiven. And what could be better than that? ■



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