



# ANGER

Facing the Fire Within



June Hunt

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JUNE HUNT



AspirePress

Torrance, California

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Title: Anger Product Code: 194X ISBN-13: 9781596366411

# CONTENTS

Anger: Facing the Fire Within  
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Aspire Press, a division of Rose Publishing, Inc.

4733 Torrance Blvd., #259

Torrance, California 90503 USA

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Printed in the United States of America  
011212DP

<b>Definitions</b> .....	8
What Is the Meaning of Anger?.....	9
What Is the Magnitude of Anger? .....	10
What Is the Misuse of Anger? .....	12
What Are Misconceptions about Anger? .....	16
<b>Characteristics of Anger</b> .....	20
What Are Your “Anger Cues”?.....	21
What Are Symptoms of Unresolved Anger?.....	23
Do You Have Hidden Anger?.....	25
Do You Act or React When You Are Angry?.....	28
<b>Causes of Anger</b> .....	31
What Are the 4 Sources of Anger? .....	32
What Causes a Sudden Increase in Anger Intensity?.....	36
Do Expectations Lead to Anger? .....	38
What Is the Root Cause of Anger? .....	43
<b>Steps to Solution</b> .....	48
How to Measure the Amount of Your Anger .....	49
How to Analyze Your Anger .....	51
How to Resolve Your Anger toward God .....	54
How to Resolve Your Past Anger.....	58
How to Rid Yourself of Childhood Anger.....	65
How to Apply the Quick Answer to Anger.....	71
How to Alleviate Your Present Anger.....	73
How to Communicate Your Anger to Another .....	81
How to Answer Common Questions about Anger.....	84
How to Accept God’s Aim for Anger.....	88

Dear friend,

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 had 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 onto my "friend." 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 had 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 ... betrayed.

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

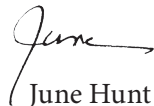
I remember thinking, *I'm not feeling any better—I have to do something else.* Then I started praying, "*Lord, teach me to act rather than react.*" Actually, I said those words over and over: "*Lord, teach me to act rather than react. Teach me to act rather than react. ...*" Soon I noticed that I was 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 did return, but this time I was able to control it rather than let it control me.

Ever since that day, when I feel a strong sense of anger, *if*—that is *if*—I remember to pray sincerely, "*Lord, teach me to act rather than react,*" God gives me His grace and power to weigh my words and speak with self-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.

Yours in the Lord’s hope,



June Hunt

P.S. 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.*

# ANGER

## Facing the Fire Within

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

He is 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 *did 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 . . .

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

# DEFINITIONS

## INJUSTICE IGNITES ANGER

Understandably, Moses felt anger over the *unjust* treatment of his Hebrew brothers, but what he did with that anger is what caused all the trouble. Moses allowed his anger to overpower him. Acting on impulse, he committed a crime—he committed murder.

Although he was right about the *injustice*, he was wrong in his reaction. His hot-blooded volatility revealed how unprepared he was for the task God had planned for him. Consequently, God kept Moses on the back side of a desert for the next 40 years so that he would realize that rescuing his own people *in his own way* would ultimately fail.

Moses needed to learn this vital lesson well to become the leader through whom God would accomplish His own will *in His own supernatural way*. In truth, Moses had tried to earn the Israelites' respect by coming to their rescue. Instead, his murderous rage earned 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 had begun as a smoldering ember in the heart of Moses quickly burst into deadly flames. Perhaps no one noticed the angry sparks flying from his eyes, but his spirit was consumed with the heat of anger.

**“Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”**  
(Exodus 2:12)

Who hasn't lit a candle and become entranced by the flickering flame? As it dances on the wick, it is a delight to see, but dangerous to touch. No one dares put a finger into even the tiniest of blazes.

Anger is much like the flame of a candle—it's associated with “heat” of varying degrees. Temperatures are determined by the hues of the flame, but no matter the blues, yellows, oranges, and reds, we all know that *it's hot*, and if we hold on to it, 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.<sup>1</sup>  
“An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.” (Proverbs 29:22)
- ▶ **Angry** people in the Bible are often described as *hot-tempered* and *quick-tempered*.  
“A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.” (Proverbs 15:18)

► **Anger** in the Old Testament is most frequently the Hebrew word *aph*, literally meaning “nose or nostrils,” figuratively depicting nostrils flaring with anger. Later, *aph* came to represent the entire face as seen in two ancient Hebrew idioms:<sup>2</sup>

- “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 man does foolish things.*” (Proverbs 14:17)

In the New Testament, the Greek word *orge* originally meant any “natural impulse or desire,” but later came to signify “anger as the strongest of all passions.” It is often translated as “wrath” because of its powerful, lasting nature.<sup>3</sup>

**“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, allow your eyes to scan the scintillating hues and shades of the flame. Notice the light blue at the center—that’s actually the hottest part of the flame, measuring 1,400° Celsius (2,552° F). The temperature then diminishes from the inner core to the outer sides, signified by shades of yellow, orange, then red, at 800° Celsius (1,472° F).

Likewise, anger can run the gamut from bright red to a light blue. 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 a wide umbrella word** covering many levels of the emotion.<sup>4</sup>

► **Indignation is simmering anger** provoked by something appearing to be unjust or unkind and often perceived as justified. Jesus became “indignant” when the disciples prevented parents from bringing their children to Him so that 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 inner emotion of anger to the outer expression of anger. In Romans 1:18 God expresses His wrath as divine judgment on those who commit willful sin.

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

► **Fury is fiery anger** so fierce that it destroys common sense. The word *fury* suggests a powerful force compelled to harm or destroy. Some members of the Sanhedrin were so angry

with Peter and the other apostles for proclaiming Jesus was God that “*they were furious and wanted to put them to death*” (Acts 5:33). This is why 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 man’s own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.*” (Proverbs 19:3)

## WHAT IS the Misuse of Anger?

Periodically, everyone feels the heat of anger, but how you handle the 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.<sup>5</sup> The Bible says ...

“**Wise men turn away anger.**”  
(Proverbs 29:8)

- ▶ **Prolonged anger**—the “*simmering stew*”—is held in for a long time. This anger is a result of an

unforgiving heart toward a past offense and the offender. Unforgiveness left unresolved eventually results in resentment and bitterness, ultimately scalding 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 misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*” (Hebrews 12:15)

- ▶ **Pressed-down anger**—the “*pressure cooker*”—is denied or hidden anger. Usually developing from a fear of facing negative emotions, this kind of anger can create a deceitful heart and lead to untruthfulness with others. Failure to honestly confront and resolve angry feelings can result in self-pity, self-contempt, and self-doubt, ultimately 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 his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.*” (1 Peter 3:10)

- ▶ **Provoked anger**—the “*short fuse*”—is quick and impatient, instantly irritated or incensed. A testy temper is often expressed using criticism or sarcasm under the guise of teasing, ultimately burning close relationships.

**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*”—is powerful, destructive, hard to control. This way of releasing anger is characterized by contempt, violence, and abuse toward others, ultimately cremating close relationships.

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

But Jesus says, “*I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. ... But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.*” (Matthew 5:22)

## Misplaced Anger

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**QUESTION:** “Why do some people take their anger out on an innocent bystander—those 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 ... who 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. The bully’s stored up anger generally comes from being abused by someone they feel powerless to confront.

► **Abusers** commonly spew out their anger on those closest to them—those most vulnerable to them. Almost all abusive adults were abused as children and grew up with the intense pressure of unresolved anger. When their anger ignites, for whatever reason, everyone around them feels the explosion and falls victim to their blistering, lava-like anger.

► **Self-injurious** people 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** haven’t the strength of character to express their anger toward the people causing their anger. (They are the ones who kick the cat when they would really like to kick the boss!) They express anger in detrimental, subversive ways.

Unfortunately, a prevalent cause of home fires is flaming candles left unattended on furniture. The scene is sadly common. The candle melts and spreads across a flammable surface that catches fire, which quickly engulfs the room. Lighted candles convey a certain charm, putting off a warm glow, often releasing a pleasantly fragrant aroma, pleasing and delighting all present. But when the flame travels from candle to furniture, it’s frightening. So it is with misplaced anger that engulfs an innocent person. Rather than being positive, it produces only pain. In the case of King Saul, his misplaced anger toward David resulted in the murder of 85 priests of God.