

The Power Behind
Anger Resolution

**Root Causes
of Anger**

Session Three

A Case Study on Anger

A respected leader attended an important board meeting. He was known to be patient and mild-mannered. However, during the meeting, another man made some comments that mocked and belittled him. The mild-mannered man boiled over with an angry response, pounded the table, and shouted back at him.

All the board members were stunned. They had never seen him do this before. He also was shocked by what he had just done and quickly apologized. However, the damage was done and the scars would remain. Scripture warns, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21).

What caused this unexpected anger?

This leader provides a classic example of a root cause of unresolved anger: tension due to the guilt of wrong responses to events in the past. In this leader's boyhood, several neighbor friends had mocked and ridiculed him. Rather than responding in forgiveness and concern for their obvious character deficiencies, he became angry, bitter, and revengeful.

His conscience told him that his responses were wrong. However, at the time he did not care. The hurt and guilt of that experience lived on in his memory and conscience. The hurt and guilt produced a tension point that was instantly activated when any similar situation occurred.

Past hurts do not just go away.

Most people assume that hurtful events in the past will be forgotten and will have no more effect upon us. This is not true. The experience of this leader illustrates the fact that these hurts do not go away, nor does the guilt from our wrong responses to them. Because of this, we pay a high price for unresolved anger and for brooding over hurts that other people and situations have caused.

The Root Cause of a Spirit of Anger

- Tension from the pain of _____¹ and guilt from _____
_____² to them.
- Tension from pain and guilt is _____³ and erupts when
new _____⁴ remind us of past hurts.

Root Causes of Anger

Based on the fact that an angry response is usually a result of some person or situation setting off a tension point from past hurts and guilt, we need to identify these past experiences and resolve them. Usually, the stronger the anger, the more pain and guilt there are from the past.

The pain of _____⁵

The pain of rejection is one of the strongest factors in a person's life, especially in childhood. A child will form strong attachments to parents, friends, and relatives and find security in these relationships. When those who are trusted communicate rejection, the

secure world of a child collapses and a host of fears results. The pain of the rejection and the torment of fears can cause a child who is rejected to develop roots of bitterness toward the one who is responsible for his pain. This is often the experience of a child when parents get divorced.

The reaction to our _____ ⁶

One of the greatest challenges facing every young person is that of accepting his unchangeable features, such as physical appearance, mental capabilities, birth order, race, brothers and sisters, and parents. When a parent, sibling, or neighbor mocks or ridicules a child who is already insecure, it is a devastating blow to his self-esteem. Ridicule does not just attack a child's actions, it mocks him as a person. One who experiences ridicule will be extremely sensitive to anyone else who ridicules him or others. The resulting anger is motivated by a desire for just punishment upon anyone who does this.

The grief of _____

⁷

When parents favor one child over another, they are not only damaging the self-worth of the child who is less appreciated, but are also causing him or her to react against the one who is favored. The Biblical example of Joseph's being favored by his father and the hatred that this produced in the lives of his brothers is a classic example of this offense. Favoritism to one will be seen as rejection by the other.

The hurt of _____ ⁸

A person's reputation has great worth. Solomon said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1). A false accusation will not only damage the accused, but will also stir up strong indignation and a desire for justice to be done to the false accuser.

A Personal Evaluation of Anger

Recall a childhood situation that deeply hurt you.

What similar situation causes anger now?

An Illustration

A mother had two sons under fifteen years of age. Every time they displayed poor table manners, she experienced an inner surge of anger that she often expressed outwardly by harshly scolding them. She knew her extremely angry responses were wrong but did not know why they were so strong in this particular area.

When asked to trace the situation to a similar one in her past, she clearly recalled many times when her younger brothers had displayed bad table manners. When she tried to correct them, they rejected her and reacted to her correction. She was hurt and angry over their responses. Therefore, every time her sons would display bad table manners, the tension from these past situations would trigger her unresolved anger.

Factors Producing Anger

1. _____⁹—Pride is usurping authority that does not belong to us. When the older sister tried to correct her brothers for their bad table manners, she was assuming a responsibility that really belonged to her parents. When she experienced wrath toward her brothers, she was usurping God's authority, because He is the only One Who has the right to go beyond the initial response of anger.
2. _____¹⁰—When we fail in specific areas, we tend to be very alert to other people who fail in the same areas. The frustration we have toward ourselves is often redirected to others through harsh judgment. Also, when someone hurts or offends us, it may be partially justified. This produces a destructive combination of guilt and bitterness.
3. _____¹¹—If we are hurt by someone who represents another group or race, we will tend to project the misbehavior of one onto the entire group and develop a general animosity toward them all.
4. _____¹²—When people make promises and fail to keep them, we tend to hold that against them and become resentful of their failure to fulfill our expectations. This same resentment can occur even without unfulfilled promises, when we expect certain behavior or benefits from those who are closest to us.
5. _____¹³—Envy is desiring what somebody else has or is given. Solomon warned that envy is the rottenness of the bones. (See Proverbs 14:30.) Jealousy is a fear of being displaced by another person.
6. _____¹⁴—One of the most entangling causes of bitterness occurs when one person who has not been offended takes up an offense for somebody else who has been offended. This kind of bitterness is deep-seated and often lasts even after the one who was offended forgives the offender.

A Classic Example of Anger From Past Hurts

One of the most vivid illustrations of the root causes of anger can be seen in the life of Moses. Some scholars have indicated that Moses was in line to become the next pharaoh of Egypt, because he was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. This position of leadership, as well as the fact that he was taken from the Nile River (which the Egyptians worshiped), indicated that the people could have viewed him as a god. In spite of this, when Moses saw the affliction and slavery of his people, he gave up all his rights

to the wealth of Egypt and dedicated his life to delivering the children of Israel from bondage.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Hebrews 11:24–26). Responses like this caused Moses to be recorded in Scripture as the meekest man of his time. (See Numbers 12:3.)

It came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian (Exodus 2:11–15).

The rejection by one of his own people was certainly a very painful experience for Moses. Rejection is always painful, especially when it comes from the very ones whom you have given your life to help. The tension brought on by the guilt of killing the slave master, along with the pain of rejection, produced a series of episodes of unresolved anger in the life of Moses, eventually causing him to be denied the privilege of leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

1. He became angry when Pharaoh rejected his

_____ ¹⁵.

God gave Moses explicit instructions on how to appeal to Pharaoh for the freedom of the children of Israel, but He also told Moses, “Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments” (Exodus 7:4).

There was therefore no reason for Moses to become angry when Pharaoh rejected his appeals. Perhaps the pain of past rejection contributed to Moses’s response when Pharaoh rejected him. “He went out from Pharaoh in a great anger” (Exodus 11:8).

Moses was seeing things from his perspective rather than God’s perspective. This is one of the major contributing factors toward unresolved anger.

2. He became angry when his _____ ¹⁶ were rejected.

When the people had no food, they murmured against Moses. His irritation was reflected in his response: “The LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD” (Exodus 16:8).

When God miraculously provided manna, Moses gave the people precise instructions from the Lord. They were to gather what they needed and keep nothing over for

the next day. However, some rejected his instructions, and Moses became wrathful. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them" (Exodus 16:20).

3. He became angry when they rejected his _____¹⁷.

While Moses was in Mount Sinai receiving the Law of God, the children of Israel decided to make themselves a golden calf. "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exodus 32:1).

When the golden calf was in place, "the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:6). Learning about the sin of the people while he was on Mt. Sinai, Moses returned to the people, carrying the Law written on tables of stone. In great wrath, Moses took the tables of stone and threw them to the ground and broke them.

4. He was angry when princes rejected his _____¹⁸.

Each experience of rejection became more painful for Moses, especially when 250 renowned princes came to Moses and their leaders said, "Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. . . . And Moses was very wroth" (Numbers 16:13-15). In their scornful rejection, they completely overlooked the anguish they had experienced in Egypt and referred to it as "a land that floweth with milk and honey." (See Numbers 16:13.)

5. He was angry when Israel rejected his whole _____¹⁹.

Even after the people murmured in Horeb about having no water and saw God bring forth an abundant spring out of the rock when Moses struck it, they still rejected his entire program later in Kadesh.

Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink (Numbers 20:3-5).

Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them (Numbers 20:10-12).

Anger From Similar Personal _____²⁰

David was a wise and compassionate king. He sought the Lord with his whole heart and he treated the people with the care and kindness of a master shepherd. God even said

of him, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (Acts 13:22).

All was going well until David committed a tragic sin. He saw a beautiful woman bathing on her flat rooftop. He lusted after her and then committed adultery with her. In an attempt to cover his sin, David arranged for the death of her husband—one of his loyal and courageous warriors. He then married her, for she was carrying his child in her womb.

All seemed normal for the next year. David continued serving as king; however, he now had the tension from the guilt of stealing a man's wife and killing her husband. One day, Nathan the prophet asked the king for counsel. He explained a situation in a way that would have aroused all the emotions of a shepherd.

There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity (II Samuel 12:1–6).

There were provisions in the Law of God for dealing with this situation. One who stole a sheep was to pay back four sheep. "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Exodus 22:1). David knew these provisions well because he had hidden them in his heart. (See Psalm 40:8.)

Notice how the tension from guilt caused David to become vengeful and go far beyond the Law of God by calling for the death penalty for this thief. Such a sentence violated another statute in God's Law, which states that a man who steals is required to make restitution but is not required to die. (See Exodus 22:2–3.)

Why We Condemn _____ 21

Scripture confirms the tendency to condemn those who have similar faults.

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Romans 2:1–5).

Notice the phrase "treasurest up unto thyself wrath" (v. 5). The Greek word used for *wrath* in this phrase is *orge*. It means "desire (as a reaching forth or excitement of the

mind), i.e. (by analogy), violent passion . . . : by implication punishment . . . indignation, vengeance." What a powerful description of the cumulative power and destruction of tension from the guilt of past failures! As the passage continues, the precise and just punishment of God for condemning others who have similar failures is also revealed.

Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil (Romans 2:6–9).

Unresolved anger produces a judgmental spirit by which we cut off fellowship with people whom we do not like and assign to them whatever punishment we think they deserve. However, it is not our place to condemn or take vengeance, because this is God's responsibility. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). Based on these factors of human nature, Jesus gives the following warning.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matthew 7:1–5).

Anger Toward Those Who Remind Us of _____²²

King Saul had a valiant and courageous son named Jonathan who had a strong bond of friendship with David. However, Saul envied David and wanted to kill him. One day Saul became angry because of David's absence at a meal. Jonathan asked Saul, "What hath he [David] done?" (I Samuel 20:32). Saul's anger toward Jonathan flared and Saul "cast a javelin at him to smite him" (II Samuel 20:33).

What caused Saul to be so angry with his son that he would throw a javelin at him to kill him? The answer can be traced to a wrong response that Saul had to a group of women who sang the praises of David and Saul after a victorious battle.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward (I Samuel 18:6–9).

David had been a faithful servant of Saul. David had played music for Saul when Saul was overcome by evil spirits, and David had risked his life to conquer Goliath. Why,

then, would Saul react so violently to the women who were simply trying to celebrate a victory? It appears that Saul had a resentment toward women, evidenced by the spirit of anger he had toward his own wife. This is quite obvious from the statement he made to Jonathan: "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman" (I Samuel 20:30). This is not an appropriate way to speak about a wife, who is to be loved, cherished, and honored.

It also appears that Saul was having trouble with his daughter, because when he learned that she loved David, Saul was eager to give her away in marriage. His goal was to destroy David, and he said, "I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him" (I Samuel 18:21). No doubt, Saul's daughter reacted to her father when she saw his wrong attitude toward her mother. Saul's daughter did have her own character deficiencies, including deception, lying, despising David, and falsely accusing David.

When we intensely dislike a person, we become sensitive to his or her faults and failures and are quick to spot these in others. This connection causes us to transfer unresolved anger from one person to another.

Anger From the Guilt of Past _____²³

Jacob had two wives. Rachel was his favorite. He had worked fourteen years for her father in order to pay the price to marry her. It is therefore surprising that he should become angry with her.

"And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:1-2).

Even though Jacob loved Rachel, her emotions and attitudes caused him to become frustrated and angry. The stated cause of her discontent was envying her sister Leah, who was Jacob's other wife. The conflicts in Jacob's marriage can be traced to wrong decisions earlier in his life.

When Jacob and his brother were born, there was a prophesy made about them. "The Lord said unto her [Rebekah], Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). Jacob was the younger. However, if he would have followed the principle taught by Jesus on serving, he would have served Esau rather than taking advantage of him. "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:26).

Rather than serving Esau, Jacob bought his birthright for a bowl of lentils and stole his blessing by deceiving his father into thinking he was Esau. Esau's hatred of Jacob caused Jacob to flee to Laban, who promised to give him Rachel as a wife if Jacob worked for him for seven years. Laban did to Jacob the same thing Jacob did to his father. He deceived Jacob by giving him his oldest daughter Leah, rather than Rachel.

What a shocking experience it must have been the next morning when Jacob discovered that all the wonderful things he thought he was saying to Rachel were actually said to Leah. Laban justified his deception by saying that it was the custom for the eldest daughter to marry first, but that he would also give Rachel to Jacob if Jacob would work seven more years.

If Jacob would have served Esau, he would not have had to flee for his life, and his father could well have done for his sons what Abraham did for Isaac—send his servant back to Laban’s house to get a wife for his eldest son. That bride could have been Leah. The servant’s second trip would have been to get a wife for Jacob. This could have been Rachel.

Jacob was destined to be blessed by the Lord; but when he took matters into his own hands, he experienced troubles that led to frustration and unresolved anger.

Anger From Rejecting God’s _____²⁴

Cain was the first son born to Adam and Eve; Abel was the second. As Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord, it is clear that Cain did not meet the standards set forth by God.

In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door (Genesis 4:3–7).

When a person has chosen to reject God’s ways, there will be a natural hatred toward those who follow God’s standards. “The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth” (Psalm 37:12). Therefore, when Cain was in the field talking with his brother, his wrath boiled over and he killed Abel. “Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Genesis 4:8).

Anger From Doing Our Own _____²⁵

Balaam’s power with God was known throughout the land, so King Balak offered him money to curse the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt. Balaam inquired of the Lord, Who told him not to curse the children of Israel because He had blessed them.

However, King Balak sent a more distinguished delegation offering a larger sum. Balaam wanted the money (see II Peter 2:15), so he again asked the Lord if he could go with them and curse the nation of Israel. It is dangerous to ask God twice for something to which He has already once said no, because He may give us the desires of our hearts but send leanness to our souls.

God told Balaam he could go with the delegation, but he could speak only the words God gave him to speak. On the way, Balaam’s donkey balked at certain points along the road, and Balaam—not recognizing why—became wrathful and beat his donkey three different times. Scripture states, “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3).

Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God’s anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the

field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face (Numbers 22:21–31).

Additional Causes of Unresolved Anger

In this study, we will identify several other specific causes of unresolved anger. However, the main purpose of this session is to recognize that strong anger can usually be traced back to unresolved hurts and our wrong responses to them. Many of these hurts will be related to people violating our rights, such as the right to have and enjoy personal possessions, the right to be respected, the right to privacy, the right to be rewarded for labor, and even the right to “my place” in traffic.

How Violated Rights Produced Strong, Unresolved Anger

For a long time, Jacob suppressed hurts and offenses caused by his father-in-law Laban. Finally, he had an angry outburst. The immediate situation was a false accusation that Jacob had stolen a family idol. However, the real issues are explained in the following response.

Twenty years have I been with thee That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times (Genesis 31:38–41).

Steps to Resolve Anger

1. Accept full responsibility for all your _____²⁶.

Unresolved anger will never be conquered as long as we justify it, explain it away, or blame others for it. It is true that parents are not to provoke their children to wrath; however, children are given sufficient grace to forgive their parents. In the final analysis, unresolved anger is more than a problem in the mind, will, and emotions. It is a spiritual problem, and therefore brings us face to face with God's requirements to control our thoughts, words, and actions, as we must give an account to Him for each one of them. (See II Corinthians 5:10, 10:5.)

Accepting personal responsibility for unresolved anger also requires that we agree with God that unresolved anger is wrong. An angry outburst is not a good way to get our point across nor is it the right way to establish our authority, let people know when they have offended us, or release emotional pressure. The Word of God states that the wrath of man does not produce God's righteousness (see James 1:20) and that we are to put away all anger, wrath, and malice (see Colossians 3:8).

Personal Application

- Ask your family how they know when you get angry.
- Ask your family how often you are angry.
- Acknowledge that all your wrath is wrong.
- Affirm your goal to resolve all anger.
- Ask for your family's forgiveness and their prayers.

2. View every new surge of anger as a fire _____²⁷.

When a strong emotion of anger occurs, it is not sin. It is usually a signal to correct a wrong response to hurt in the past. The present situation that triggered the anger is probably similar to the past situation or is in some way related to it. For example, a father might feel an emotion of anger when his son does not obey him. However, that emotion may be coming from his own bitterness toward his father when he was growing up.

By using the anger from the present situation to remind him of past disobedience, and then by going back to his father and asking for forgiveness for his wrong actions and attitudes, he is turning anger into a valuable "alarm."

If this father fails to see anger as an alarm reminding him of his wrong response in the past, he may try to "control" his unresolved anger. However, he will still communicate a spirit of anger to his son, or he will express his unresolved anger through damaging words or actions toward his son.

This new approach to anger resolution is described in the Biblical instruction: "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Ephesians 4:26), which means that if you are angry over a situation, do not let the anger stir you up to do something that would be wrong.

This verse also gives a time limit to responding properly to the initial feelings of anger: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." No anger should be allowed to continue overnight. If it does, it will turn into wrath and give "ground," or jurisdiction, in an

area of the soul to Satan. For this reason, we have the triple warning: “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). The word *place* actually means an area of control or jurisdiction.

When we let anger turn into wrath, Satan is given an area of influence in our minds, wills, and emotions. With this new authority, he implants wrong thoughts, emotions, and decisions such as “Your parents are evil; they will never change. The way to treat them is to tell them off or to leave home and move in with somebody who will appreciate you.”

Personal Application

Fill out this chart in association with the next three times you get angry.

Present Cause of Anger	Past Hurts and Guilt
1. _____ _____	_____ _____
2. _____ _____	_____ _____
3. _____ _____	_____ _____

3. Correct past _____²⁸.

As soon as you trace present anger to past hurts or offenses, recall all the details surrounding them. What were the events leading up to those hurts? Did you do anything to cause the hurts by wrong attitudes, inappropriate words, or damaging actions? When the hurts occurred, were you in disobedience to your parents’ will or instructions? Was God allowing you to be treated in the same way you have treated others? Was this a “reproof” for some other area of disobedience in your life? Were there situations that you should have reported to your parents or law officials?

When you were hurt in the past, did you respond with a loving spirit of forgiveness, or did you become angry, wrathful, and bitter? Did you say things that were hurtful or damaging to the ones who offended you? Did you go to bed angry and allow the initial anger to fester into hatred or thoughts of revenge? Did you revile, gossip, slander, or cut off your spirit from the ones who hurt you, rather than recognize their obvious needs, forgive them in your heart, and pray for them?

If you experience strong anger over a present situation but cannot think of a past cause, ask God for wisdom since He has promised to give it to all who request it. For example, you may become angry if someone steals or damages one of your prized possessions. After asking God for wisdom on past causes, consider the following questions: Have you ever borrowed things and never returned them? Have you failed to give an employer a full day’s work for a day’s wage? Have you cheated on tax issues? Have you robbed God of your tithes and offerings? Have you stolen things from stores or the homes of neighbors?

After considering the causes of guilt from past experiences, determine how you can make right each situation. With some, it will be a matter of asking forgiveness, and with others, there will be a need for restitution. In every case, be sincere, fully honest, and genuine in your repentance.

Example: Asking Forgiveness of Parents

If you showed disrespect toward your parents while growing up, that offense will be the cause of future hurts and conflicts. This fact is based on the fifth commandment: "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2-3). It would be important, therefore, to ask your parents to forgive you in a way similar to the following example.

"When I was younger, I did not give you the respect or the honor that you deserve as my parents. I did not see you as God's protectors and instructors over me. I lied to you, stole things from you, and talked bad about you to others. I was wrong in all of this. I realize now how deeply I hurt you. Would you forgive me?" (Make sure you are specific and confess what you have done to wrong them.)

Before going to the one you offended, it would be wise to first ask God to forgive you, since whatever we do against another person, we also do against God. We have broken His commandments to not steal, to honor father and mother, to speak evil of no man, etc.

When you clear your conscience of past offenses, you will experience two wonderful results. First, you will enjoy freedom from past guilt. Second, you will have a loving desire to help other people follow your example when you see them offending in a similar way. This desire will be one of the most powerful ways to dissolve anger when somebody offends you.

4. _____²⁹ God for His purposes in allowing offenses to come.

If somebody provoked you to anger and that caused you to clear up past conflicts, you can sincerely say to that person, "I want to thank you because God used you to help me clear up some things in the past, which will make me more understanding of others." By doing this, you are fulfilling the instruction in Scripture: "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not" (Romans 12:14).