

# ANGER

## Care Guide

*A field-ready reference for biblical counselors using a three-part process to examine the struggle, encourage with Scripture, and execute through sanctification.*

### Examine the Struggle

*Use these questions and observations to assess anger, discern patterns and thought processes, and understand its spiritual and emotional contours.*

Emotional &  
Cognitive

- Persistent irritation, resentment, bitterness, or contempt
- Rehearsing offenses, difficulty letting go
- Sense of being disrespected, treated unfairly, or not heard
- Black-and-white judgments of others' motives

What do you feel entitled to the moment anger shows up?

What thought repeats most when you're angry?

What story are you telling yourself about the other person's motives?

What feels most intolerable in those moments?

Behavioral &  
Relational

- Explosive outbursts, sharp tone, sarcasm, passive-aggression
- Controlling behaviors
- Withdrawal/silent treatment, stonewalling
- Argumentativeness, "truth-telling" without gentleness and grace

How do you tend to express anger: outbursts, withdrawal, sarcasm, control?

What do you hope your anger will accomplish?

Who is most affected by your anger?

How do others typically respond when you're angry?

Spiritual

- Using Scripture primarily to condemn others
- Difficulty extending grace, patience, or forgiveness
- Confusing a zeal for righteousness with personal vindication
- Suppressed anger cloaked as being "fine" or being "strong"

How do you think God views your anger in those moments?

What feels hardest to entrust to God when you're angry?

Is there grief or fear underneath the anger that hasn't been named?

Do you feel more justified than humbled by your anger?

Physical &  
Safety

- Muscle tension, clenched jaw, headaches
- Elevated heart rate, agitation
- Post-episode exhaustion

What happens in your body when anger rises?

What signals tell you you're escalating?

What helps you physically de-escalate, even a little?

Have there been moments your anger felt out of control?

Are you aware of anyone feeling unsafe because of your anger?

## Encourage in Scripture

Use these passages to promote discernment, restraint, repentance, reconciliation, and hope.

James 1:19-20 — *“The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

**Use for:** Reorienting expectations about anger’s effectiveness

**How:** Help the counselee see that anger often promises righteousness but quietly undermines God’s purposes.

Ephesians 4:26-32 — *“Be angry and do not sin...”*

**Use for:** Differentiating righteous concern from sinful expression

**How:** Walk through timing, restraint, speech, forgiveness, and the call to put off/put on patterns.

Proverbs 14:29 — *“Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding.”*

**Use for:** Valuing restraint as wisdom, not weakness

**How:** Reframe patience as strength; invite practices that create space before reacting.

Psalm 4:4 — *“Be angry, and do not sin... ponder... and be silent.”*

**Use for:** Creating space between emotion and action

**How:** Teach reflective pause and quiet as safeguards against impulsive harm.

Romans 12:17-21 — *“Leave room for the wrath of God.”*

**Use for:** Surrendering vengeance and control

**How:** Emphasize trust in God’s justice over personal retaliation; discuss non-retaliatory good.

Matthew 5:21-26 — *“Reconcile quickly with your adversary...”*

**Use for:** Elevating the seriousness of unresolved anger

**How:** Encourage proactive reconciliation rather than minimizing heart-level hostility.

Colossians 3:8-15 — *“Put off anger... put on compassion...”*

**Use for:** Identity-based transformation

**How:** Connect change to union with Christ and the new self, not mere behavior management.

Psalm 103:8-14 — *“He remembers that we are dust.”*

**Use for:** Softening harshness and cultivating mercy

**How:** Invite imitation of God’s compassion toward our own finitude and toward others.

## Execute through Sanctification

Here are practical growth assignments grounded in theological insights that help move counselees from reactive anger to humble, wise engagement.

### Anger Awareness Log (Patterns & Demands)

**Assignment:** For one week, record: situation → emotion → what the anger wanted/demanded → response → outcome.

**Purpose:** To expose triggers and heart-level demands beneath anger

### Manifestations of Anger Mapping (Types of Anger)

**Assignment:** Identify which forms show up most (explosive, passive-aggressive, withdrawal, controlling, self-righteous, irritable, internalized, defensive). Provide one recent example for each circled type.

**Reflection:** Which forms have the highest relational cost? Which feels most “justified”?

**Purpose:** Target *how* anger manifests, not only that it exists.

### Powlison’s 7 Tests of Righteous Anger (Discernment Tool)

**Assignment:** Apply the seven tests to a recent episode:

- Do you get angry about the right things?
- Do you express your anger in the right way?
- How long does your anger last?
- How controlled is your anger?
- What motivates your anger?
- Is your anger “primed and ready” to respond to another person’s habitual sins?
- What is the effect of your anger?

**Purpose:** Distinguish between righteous concern and sinful self-vindication.

(See Powlison, David. “Anger Part 1: Understanding Anger.” *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 14:1, 1995.)

### Pause-Name-Entrust Practice

(Psalm 4:4; Romans 12:19)

**Assignment:** Pause; name the threatened good (respect, safety, control, justice); entrust justice to God in prayer before responding.

**Purpose:** Insert wisdom between impulse and action.

### Repair & Reconciliation Step (Matthew 5:23-24)

**Assignment:** Take one concrete step toward repair this week (apology without justification; clarifying conversation; restitution where appropriate).

**Purpose:** Practice gospel-shaped repair rather than mere self-control.

Optional Supplement - You may need to involve a:

- **Medical doctor** if agitation is a side effect of medication
- **Pastor/elder** for mediation of entrenched conflict
- **Trusted friend or spouse** for accountability, presence, and practical help

You can find expanded resources on this topic in ABC’s membership page at [christiancounseling.com](http://christiancounseling.com).

