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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.

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).

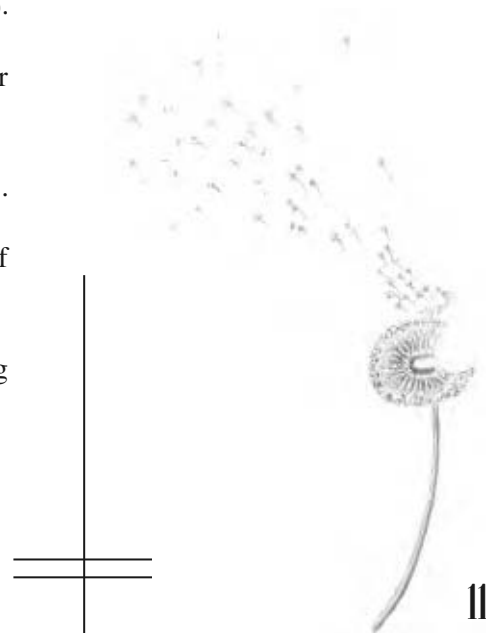
Read Matthew 21:12–17.

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)¹ _____
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