

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD
WITH KEITH WALL

Taming Tempers

Making Anger Your Ally



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Foreword

Dear Reader:

It's just like God to arrange for the book you have in your hand to be a gift to our family as well. You see, we have also experienced turbulent times and are learning what it means to be content after the events of July 4, 2025.

It was a lovely summer day in the Pacific Northwest. As is our tradition, the Jantz family enjoyed a beautiful, bright Fourth of July together as we watched our local parade, barbecued, and enjoyed resting in the sun. It was a day to reflect on God's goodness to us in giving us health, family, and freedom—including the opportunity to worship him with no constraints.

At dusk, as Gregg started to move his convertible into the lower garage of our home, the unthinkable happened. Attempting to back the car down the steep driveway, tires on one side of the vehicle hooked onto

a retaining wall, flipping the convertible. Help arrived quickly, but ultimately Gregg succumbed to his injuries. It was clear he died peacefully, and Jesus very simply came and escorted him home so mercifully.

It still seems surreal that Gregg—husband, father, brother, son, and friend—has left this world for an eternity with Jesus, the One he loved and served. It is because of Jesus that Gregg desired to serve others. He sought to understand and care for those affected by this fallen world as they coped with abuse, trauma, and hurt. Gregg's life's work and mission—The Center • A Place of Hope, located on the Puget Sound in Edmonds, Washington—continues this calling each day.

If you are holding this book, you, too, may be searching for guidance as you navigate your own struggles. Perhaps you have looked for it in places that have not brought lasting peace. We, the Jantz family, want you to know that there is real hope of finding peace amid your turmoil and darkest moments, even when it feels impossible.

As you begin this book, no matter where you are in your journey, Gregg would remind you that you can embrace this challenge with hope. With God in it and alongside you, may you find lasting peace and healing.

THE JANTZ FAMILY
EDMONDS, WA, MAY 2026



INTRODUCTION

Anger: Friend or Foe?

Here is the sum total of what most of us know about anger: We don't like it—not in ourselves and certainly not in other people. Anger is usually as welcome as a broken leg or an IRS audit.

Who can blame us? In our experience, anger is dangerous, destructive, and dysfunctional. If we're dishing it out, it makes us feel embarrassed and ashamed. If we're receiving the brunt of someone else's anger, it makes us feel wounded and victimized. We've all seen the damage anger can do to our relationships, our physical and mental health, and our spiritual well-being.

What more do we need to know?

I suspect you picked up this book because unrestrained anger is not simply a theoretical issue for you. It has

flared up like a runaway brush fire in your life—and you’ve discovered how little power you have over it.

Perhaps you have an unpredictable, explosive temper yourself, or you live with someone who does. You’ve tried everything to “manage” this anger—control it, avoid it, or pretend it doesn’t exist. You’ve pushed, pulled, and pleaded. But for all your effort, anger still smokes and smolders on the horizon of your life, threatening to erupt at any time and bury you in molten emotion.

It is true that unleashed anger does great harm to innocent people every day. It’s true that the way we often experience anger—hot and uncontrolled—leads to negative consequences. As with any ticking bomb,

sometimes there is no time to analyze the problem. All you can do is get as far away from it as possible.

**DOES ANGER SMOKE
AND SMOLDER ON
THE HORIZON OF
YOUR LIFE?**



Does this fearful view of anger tell the whole story about its nature and purpose? Or is it just a tactical response, good for damage control and emergency evacuation?

The truth is, in our rush to overcome anger at any cost, we’ve missed the big picture. We’ve gone

into battle ill-informed and ill-equipped. That's because we know what anger *does* and how it *feels*, and we know that we don't *like* it, but very few truly understand *what it is*. It's important to change that fact, before we go looking for practical ways to "handle" our strong emotions. We need to know:

- What anger is
- What anger's purpose is
- How anger can play a positive role in our lives

As explained by Erin Bullett, director of the Psychological Services Clinic at the University of Missouri,

Anger tends to get a bad rap as an emotion that we want to avoid when in reality it's a very valid and important emotion. But not all expressions of anger or the behaviors that we pair with anger are useful.... Anger can motivate us to engage in change behavior if, for example, an important goal is being blocked, if someone we care about is being

**UNLEASHED ANGER
DOES GREAT HARM
TO INNOCENT
PEOPLE EVERY DAY.**



threatened or attacked, or if we feel disrespected or like we have lost power.¹

That's our goal in this book: to learn to respond to anger constructively. As the director of a large mental health clinic and a frequent presenter at seminars, I often hear statements such as:

- "I feel guilty about being angry, but I can't help it."
- "I fly off the handle and immediately regret it. I'm stuck in this vicious cycle."
- "My temper comes out of nowhere, like a monster bursting from the closet. I don't mean to get so mad, but I do."

Lots of people are confused about where their anger comes from and what to do about it. In *Taming Tempers: Making Anger Your Ally*, we'll examine the truth about anger from a safe distance so that we can approach it more consciously and confidently. Along the way, we'll discover that our mistaken beliefs about anger are a major reason we often fail to manage it well. The exercises at the end of each chapter offer practical ways to apply what we've learned about taming our tempers and making anger our ally. Let's begin by considering the role that anger plays in our lives.



CHAPTER 1

Understand the Role of Anger

In this book, our goal is not to eliminate anger from our lives. That would create a futile and frustrating burden. Rather, our destination is freedom from the destructive effects of improper and uncontrolled anger, on ourselves and others. With that in mind, let's explore some basic truths about what anger is and what it is not.

| What Anger Is Not

Anger Is Not a Defect

Have you ever said something like “What’s wrong with me? I feel hungry—even though I haven’t eaten all day” or “What’s wrong with me? I feel sleepy—even though the baby kept me up all night”? Probably not. We accept

the logic that certain feelings follow specific conditions or triggers. It's only natural to feel sad after you lose a loved one, or to feel disappointed if you were passed over for a promotion. But chances are, at some time in your life you've said something like "I just don't know what's *wrong* with me. I feel so *angry*!"

When you get angry, there is *nothing* wrong with you. Anger, like any other emotion, is simply a natural part of being human. In their book *The Anger Advantage*, mental health professionals Deborah Cox, Karin Bruckner, and Sally Stabb wrote that "*there are no bad emotions.... Anger is not some by-product of your misguided upbringing or a character flaw. It is an essential part of being human. Acknowledging this reality can help to free you from anger myths and negative anger behaviors.*"²

"YOU HAVE SEARCHED ME, LORD,
AND YOU KNOW ME. FOR YOU
CREATED MY INMOST BEING."

—Psalm 139:1, 13

Condemning ourselves for a natural and beneficial emotion is pointless. Feelings of anger are not your enemy. They have a purpose and

a proper place in your life. Anger is a God-given emotion full of the useful energy and vital information you need to successfully navigate life's conflicts. Our challenge

and opportunity is to steward this emotion in a way that is helpful, not hurtful. The American Psychological Association defines anger this way:

An emotion characterized by tension and hostility arising from frustration, real or imagined injury by another, or perceived injustice. It can manifest itself in behaviors designed to remove the object of the anger (e.g., determined action) or behaviors designed merely to express the emotion (e.g., swearing). Anger is distinct from, but a significant activator of, aggression, which is behavior intended to harm someone or something. Despite their mutually influential relationship, anger is neither necessary nor sufficient for aggression to occur.³

Mismanagement of angry feelings and the inability to control heated emotions can quickly become destructive. There is a big difference between anger and aggression: Anger is a helpful physical response to something that is wrong, while aggression is a harmful, willful response to anger. Aggression lashes out in revenge and ridicule and sometimes escalates into verbal or physical abuse.

People who mismanage their angry feelings often engage in a pattern of heated, verbal rants that might also involve physical actions such as throwing an object or

pounding a wall. Once started, these rants don't seem to diminish. They gather steam until others in the vicinity become alarmed or frightened.

Anger Is Not a Sin

As we've discussed, some people misunderstand the role of anger in their life, relationships, and interactions with

others. They believe it is wrong to feel angry and that this emotion should be avoided or suppressed.

**PEOPLE WHO
MISMANAGE THEIR
ANGRY FEELINGS
OFTEN ENGAGE
IN A PATTERN OF
HEATED, VERBAL
RANTS.**

I have found that people who grew up in a family where emotional expression was discouraged or stifled—where emotions were tightly controlled and reined in—tend to perceive anger as bad. They keep their own angry feelings under wraps and view the anger of others with skepticism or even scorn.

I have also found that people who grew up in, or are currently involved in, a strict religious

tradition often regard anger as a sign of failure, a character flaw to overcome, or even a sin. But anger is, in fact, a natural and helpful response to frightening or



unjust encounters. God endowed us with emotions, and I'm so grateful he did.

Anger can propel human beings toward noble goals, empowering us to stand up for what is morally right and to protect ourselves from threats to our safety. As a devout person of faith,

I draw guidance from Scripture, which tells us many things about anger, including:

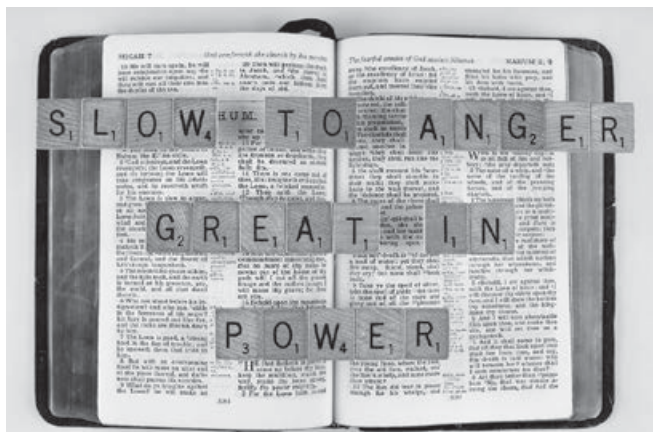
- God himself becomes angry: "The LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath" (Jeremiah 10:10).
- You can feel angry and still not engage in wrongdoing: "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26).
- Anger is not wrong, but there are more constructive approaches to creating healthy relationships: "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires" (James 1:19–20).

"IN YOUR ANGER DO NOT SIN."

—Ephesians 4:26

- Jesus, the ultimate example of peacemaking and patience, expressed his anger, especially when injustice called for action: “[Jesus] overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts” (Mark 11:15–16).

A theme woven through Scripture is a theme I want to highlight throughout the pages of this book: Anger is not bad, it is not a sign of weakness, and it is not a moral deficiency. Anger is a powerful force that can be used to help or harm, repair or ruin, inspire or injure.



| What Anger Is

Anger Is a Warning Signal

Pain has been called “the gift that nobody wants.” It is a gift because it alerts us to the presence of injuries that, if left unattended, might become severe or even life-threatening. Few people recognize that anger plays a similar role. It sends up a red flag when we are the victim of injustice or when our boundaries are violated. Sometimes our anger points to unresolved issues in our past or to our own selfish behavior in the present. In any case, it signals the need for corrective action.

Think of it this way: God’s design for anger can be likened to the Check Engine warning on your vehicle’s dashboard: It comes on to alert you to a potential problem. Something is malfunctioning and not operating according to the manufacturer’s specs. If you ignore the warning, you do so at your own risk.

The same is true for anger: Warning. Caution. Alert. Be sensitive to these feelings, for they are trying to tell you

**ANGER SIGNALS
THE NEED FOR
CORRECTIVE
ACTION.**



something. Your anger is always trying to *communicate* with you. Every time you suppress it or misuse it, you miss out on its important messages.

Anger Is Fuel for Positive Change

Author Mildred Witte Struven once wrote, “A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain.”⁴ Often it is the “white heat” of righteous anger that spurs us to put aside our fear and reach for the abundant life God promised us. For instance, some spouses only escape the gravitational pull of an abusive relationship when anger finally propels them toward self-preservation. Injustice of every kind *deserves* our outrage—and creating a better world for ourselves and others often depends on it.

Who knows what opportunities for positive change we miss in our fear of being angry. The more we learn about the true nature and purpose of anger, we might actually discover times when the right thing is to be *more* angry, not less. Sometimes anger is not only appropriate but positively beneficial. Again, that’s because anger—like pain—is a signal that something is not right in your environment. Anger motivates us to:

- correct what is amiss in the world and in ourselves,
- set and keep personal boundaries,
- defend ourselves when threatened,
- stand up for others in need of help, and
- lend our voice to important issues in our community.

| Let Anger Play Its Role

Deep feelings are a God-ordained part of human character. It is not wrong to experience the heights and depths of emotion. Yet given the right set of circumstances (or perhaps I should say the *wrong* set), we may be shocked at our own reactions and create more of a problem than a solution. We all need to be able to acknowledge our emotions, but we also have a choice about how we will respond. We can feed on negative feelings or act in a way that demonstrates a healthy model to a world hungry for healing.

There is no doubt that at times we all suffer from selfish, unrestrained anger—as individuals, families, workplaces, church congregations, and whole nations. It can lead to all sorts of tragic and terrible consequences: illness, violent crime, addiction, divorce, and war, to

name but a few. Sometimes anger is appropriate to the circumstances and sometimes it's not. There is a balance to anger that many people haven't learned to

**CRAFT A ROLE FOR
ANGER IN YOUR
LIFE THAT IS WITHIN
APPROPRIATE
BOUNDARIES.**



negotiate: We get angry about things we shouldn't, and we are complacent over things we should be angry about.

The answer isn't to expunge all anger from your life; that isn't possible. Anger is an emotion and a reaction you will continue to feel and experience. The answer is to learn how to craft a role for anger in your life that is within appropriate boundaries and healthy expression. You can

indeed learn to make anger your ally. One familiar saying tells us that "knowledge is power," so the most effective tool for taming tempers is awareness. As you take the following assessment, you will come to see your anger more clearly—and find ways to manage it.

ASSESS YOUR APPROACH TO ANGER

I get angry when:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When I am on the verge of losing control of my anger, I feel
(include physical sensations and emotions):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Once my anger is triggered, I no longer feel able to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If I could go back in time, I would like to tell someone who hurt me:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If I let go of my anger, I'm afraid I might lose:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If I let go of my anger, I might gain:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Three healthy ways I can express myself without uncontrolled anger are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____