

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## *How to Use This Guide*

This thirteen-session Discussion Guide for *Anger* is intended to maximize your personal learning through small-group dialogue and encouragement. As you discuss these questions in small groups, workplace studies, book club reading groups, or even with a spouse or close friend, you'll find your own growth furthered as you communicate key ideas with others.

You can format your group with whatever option helps you most. Some prefer a short lunchtime group with a thirty- to forty-minute time of sharing. Others meet during mornings or evenings for an extended period of sixty minutes or more. Still some may prefer to use this guide for a weekend retreat or for personal enrichment.

The structure has intentionally been kept simple, yet high impact. Each chapter begins with a **“Getting Started”** segment to help fuel your initial interaction. **“Questions for Discussion”** provides a helpful way to talk together about the actual content from the book. **“Thoughts for Reflection”** suggests various ideas to stimulate meaningful conversation based on each chapter. Finally, each session ends with **“Options for Application,”** specific opportunities to integrate what you've learned with your daily life.

We highly value your group's stories of life change! We look forward to hearing the difference *Anger* makes in your life and the lives of those in your group. Please send your accounts to [stories@garychapman.org](mailto:stories@garychapman.org).

## **CHAPTER 1: WHERE DOES ANGER COME FROM?**

**Getting Started:** Share one of the most ridiculous reasons you've experienced of a person becoming angry. Why did the person think the issue was such a big deal?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What was Brooke's perception of her ability to manage anger before she was at home with young children? What was her perception *after* having children? Why does she now seem overwhelmed?
2. Bill comes in asking for help with his anger control problem. What caused him to finally seek help?
3. This chapter defines anger as more than an emotion. How would you describe or define anger?
4. Which Bible verse stands out to you the most as you consider God's view regarding anger?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. What are some ways in which anger can be *constructive* rather than *destructive*?
6. What are some of the life situations that most quickly cause you to become angry? How can you better anticipate some of these situations?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

7. List an occasion when you became angry during the past week. On a sheet of paper, list what triggered your anger, how you expressed your anger, and what you wish you had done differently in response.

Seek to develop this habit in your mind over the next week to help anticipate and respond to anger more appropriately.

8. Most people receive their “anger training” at home. In a journal or on a piece of paper, write how anger was modeled to you as a child. Aim for at least five factors (negative or positive) and consider how this “training” influences you still today.

## **CHAPTER 2: WHEN ANGER CAN DO GOOD**

**Getting Started:** Anger can cause us to do some rather silly things. What are some of the things that appear humorous now as you look back at past times of anger? If time allows, also share some of your journaling thoughts from the past week (if you completed “Option for Application #8” in chapter 1).

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. This chapter begins by declaring that God’s purpose for anger is to motivate us toward constructive action. In what ways can anger motivate us toward positive change?
2. Using the examples from the chapter, describe how Jesus responded to anger. What common themes develop? In what ways was His anger holy and just?
3. How did the people of Nineveh in Jonah’s story know that God’s anger toward them was motivated by love?
4. Anger is sometimes motivated by personal pain or loss, as in the example of the founder of MADD. What are some other examples where personal pain has caused constructive change, either from this chapter or from your life experiences?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. When is a time you have responded with appropriate anger? How did your positive use of anger help improve a negative situation?
6. The author suggests that a positive focus of anger occurs when a person or group decides, “This is not right.” What is an area that is “not right” in your life in which you desire personal change? In what ways can you respond with a positive form of anger?

**OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

7. Name some ways that anger has transformed society toward greater good. For instance, anger over the injustices of segregation inspired many in the civil rights movement. What are some things in life that anger you in which you could create positive change?
  
8. Use a Bible concordance, study Bible, or [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) to look up how anger is used in a few places in the Bible. What positive traits can be learned from the examples you read? Pick two or three to focus on over the next week.

### **CHAPTER 3: WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY FOR GOOD REASON**

**Getting Started:** Think of a book or film in which a character's anger caused him or her to act in a productive way. What did he or she do? What positive change resulted from the actions?

#### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Share some of your insights from the anger word study you did from the Bible for chapter 2, item 8. In what ways does Scripture provide helpful examples of dealing with anger in positive ways?
2. Chapter 3 begins with several scenarios in which one person is angry at another person. Who are the people in life who can make us angry most easily (such as a boss or family member)? Why do these particular people make us angry more easily than others?
3. What is valid anger? What is the difference between anger that is valid and anger that is not valid?
4. Review the five steps to making anger productive that are listed in this chapter. Which step is the easiest for you to apply? Which is the most difficult?

#### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. When you are in the midst of an angry encounter, in what ways is it difficult to think through anger positively? What could you do to help "catch" yourself when this happens?
6. The author shares the idea of counting to 100 or even 1,000 to help slow down and gain perspective on our anger. What other ideas have you seen or used to help slow down angry situations?

7. Discuss as a group why the two biblical options to express anger are forbearance or rebuke.

**OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

8. Take a few moments to write a fictional letter to someone who has made you angry recently. How could you apply the five steps presented in this chapter?
9. How could you help someone else control an angry response using these five steps? Choose a friend or family member this week to communicate with regarding these concepts. Be prepared to share about this conversation in your next group time together.

## **CHAPTER 4: WHEN ANGER IS WRONG**

**Getting Started:** What was something that caused you to become angry as a child? Share how you learned to handle anger in your childhood years.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. When is a recent time you felt you had “the right” to become angry? What made you feel this way?
2. This chapter explores two major types of anger: definitive and distorted. How would you define the difference between these kinds of anger?
3. Which biblical example of distorted anger from this chapter stands out to you the most? What is it about the story that connects with your life situation?
4. What are some of the key ways to identify distorted anger in your life?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. Recall a time when your anger became distorted. What triggered this type of anger? How does identifying these “triggers” assist you in identifying and processing distorted anger?
6. How does identifying distorted anger complement the concept of learning from your mistakes? In other words, in what ways can identifying the sources of anger in the past help gain better perspective regarding future angry situations?

### **OPTION FOR APPLICATION**

7. Can you think of someone you have recently hurt due to your

expression of distorted anger? Contact this person directly or through a phone call, letter, or e-mail to apologize for the reaction.

## **CHAPTER 5: HOW TO HANDLE “BAD” ANGER**

**Getting Started:** Describe a time you became angry over a situation you misunderstood. (For example, you were mad at your friend for arriving late, but discovered her car broke down on the way.) How did your reaction change once you understood the full situation?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What are the four elements shared in this chapter to constructively handle anger? Which of these four do you find the easiest to practice? Which is the most difficult?
2. In what ways can asking yourself, “Do I have all of the facts?” benefit a situation?
3. In the statement, “I’m feeling frustrated and I need your help,” what is being asked of the other person? How could this request lead to the other person acknowledging fault?
4. During Rita and Doug’s story in this chapter, the process required negotiating understanding to help improve their relationship. What is an area of frustration you have encountered that could be enhanced from negotiating understanding in a similar way?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. When is a time you have experienced another person respond to your anger in an extremely helpful way? What did he do that made his response so positive? What can be learned from his example?
6. Who is a person you could work with to improve your response to angry situations? Consider choosing a friend or family member you can share this chapter’s principles with and discuss how to help one another improve in responding when angry.

**OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

7. List the four steps (elements) used in this chapter on a piece of paper. Using a recent point of frustration in your own life, list how each step can apply in your situation.
  
8. Search for an opportunity this week to apply these four steps as you face frustrating people or problems. Note how this affects the outcome of the situation. Be prepared to share with your group the difference these steps make.

## **CHAPTER 6: EXPLOSIONS AND IMPLOSIONS**

**Getting Started:** Think of a movie or television show you have watched that shows the results of destructive anger. What happened? What could have been done differently to change the outcome?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. This chapter identifies two main responses to anger: implosion and explosion. Which is your most common response?
2. What are some typical signs of explosive anger? According to the research presented, what is the result of venting anger?
3. For a person who has developed abusive or unhealthy patterns in expressing anger, what most often motivates him or her to seek help?
4. What are some common signs of implosive anger? How can implosive anger hurt both the angry person and those around him or her?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. In what ways is your expression of anger affecting your relationships with family, friends, classmates, or coworkers? What one area needs the most emphasis to improve your response to tense situations?
6. How can suppressing anger lead to hate? In what ways have you seen this in the life experiences of those you know?
7. Using the verses from this chapter, what principles can you discover for handling destructive anger (Ephesians 4:26–27, 31; Colossians 3:8; Ecclesiastes 7:9)?

**OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

8. List at least three of your recent anger situations on a sheet of paper. Beside each one, write how you reacted, with explosive or implosive anger. In a third column, write down what did happen and what could have been done to improve your response. Use your findings to help with upcoming difficult encounters in the coming week.
  
9. Review the verses used in the section on implosive anger. Choose one to list on an index card for daily review and memorization over the next week. Come prepared to your next group time to share how this verse has helped in your daily life.

**CHAPTER 7: THE ANGER THAT LASTS FOR YEARS**

**Getting Started:** Anger is a major issue in any workplace context. What are some of the issues that anger people the most in a job? Why do people often “store” their anger while at work?

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. In what ways can you relate to Mike and Julie’s story in this chapter? Do you connect more with Mike or Julie in the story? Why do you think this is the case?
2. From Julie’s point of view, how had Mike’s behavior changed over the past couple of years? What were his observable tendencies in expressing anger?
3. What two traits does Mike display that are common to stored anger? How have you seen these in your life or in the life of someone close to you?
4. What are some advantages of holding to the opinion that “You can’t change the past, so why bother with it?” What realities must we consider when we are dealing with anger?
5. Anger often causes negative issues within marriage. How did Mike’s anger hurt his marriage relationship?

**THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

6. When is a time you have “stored” your anger? How did avoiding the anger at the time cause problems later?
7. How can you make it easier for those around you to deal with stored anger? For example, as a parent, how can you help your children resolve anger rather than store it?

**OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

8. Apply Mike's "homework" assignment to your life. On a sheet of paper, list: Who are the people who have wronged me? What have they done? Afterward, review how the anger was handled. Identify any unresolved areas and use the ideas from this chapter as a guide to help deal with any stored anger.
  
9. One recommendation to Mike was to get alone with God. If this is an area of challenge in your life, schedule some time in the next few days to spend an extended time alone with God. Use a portion of this time to pray regarding individuals who have angered you (perhaps from your list from question 8), seeking God's wisdom for processing any stored anger.

## **CHAPTER 8: WHAT ABOUT FORGIVENESS?**

**Getting Started:** Why is it often difficult to forgive someone who has offended us? When was a time you have forgiven someone and seen the relationship improved?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How does this chapter define forgiveness? How is God's forgiveness similar to how we are to forgive others?
2. Two realities of forgiveness are presented in this chapter. What are they? How have you continued to experience these realities when forgiving someone?
3. What two decisive steps are required for biblical forgiveness according to this chapter? How is this different from nonbiblical forgiveness?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

4. What is a relationship issue you are involved in right now that may require an apology from you to improve communication?
5. This chapter explains that it is often important to cool down before talking with someone about an important issue of forgiveness. How can taking a "time-out" help in situations where you need to forgive another person?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

6. Perhaps there is someone in your life you would like to apologize to but the person is no longer available, whether by death or another factor. Take an alternative approach and write an apology regarding forgiveness on paper or in a journal, personally removing this barrier from your life.

7. Consider obtaining and reading a copy of *The Five Languages of Apology* by Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas for additional insights on forgiveness, especially chapters 6 and 9.

## **CHAPTER 9: WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY AT YOUR SPOUSE**

**Getting Started:** What are some of the key sources of anger in a marriage relationship? Why do the sources you choose cause so much frustration?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What are the six strategies suggested in this chapter for dealing with anger in marriage? Which one do you find the easiest to practice? Which one do you find the most difficult?
2. Why is it important to seek an explanation before passing judgment when angry?
3. How can a couple affirm their love to each other when angry? What are some specific phrases or actions that could help?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

4. Why is it critically important to develop ways to deal with anger positively in a marriage relationship? How has dealing with anger in your marriage strengthened your relationship?
5. Who are some of the married couples you admire? How do they handle anger situations? What can you learn from them to assist your own marriage relationship?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

6. Chapter 9 concludes with a description of a helpful note card and an explanation of how to use it. Detach the card that is provided at the back of this book and begin to use it as needed. During your next time together, be prepared to share with your group how this card helped.

7. If married, choose a signal you and your spouse can use when you become angry at each other in public. For instance, a certain phrase like “we can talk about that one at home” can be used to defuse a potentially angry situation to be dealt with in private later.
  
8. Consider reading an additional book on marriage, such as *Dr. Gary Chapman on the Marriage You’ve Always Wanted*.

## **CHAPTER 10: HELPING CHILDREN HANDLE ANGER**

**Getting Started:** When was a time you became very angry as a child? What happened? How did your response then resemble how you respond to anger as an adult?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Why is it important to establish a foundation of love with children to help them deal with anger?
2. In Scott and Dee's story, how did their examples influence the angry reaction of their son?
3. A child has two basic ways to express anger: verbally or behaviorally. Which way is most common with your own children? How can recognizing this tendency help in guiding your child's reaction with anger?
4. Why does giving instruction without showing love and setting an example lack positive results?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. In what ways can you help your child learn what God's Word says about handling anger? What are you already doing well? What areas need improvement?
6. We often treat our children the way we were treated as children. What positive traits did your parents offer that you desire to continue? What are some areas you want to change with your children?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

7. Decide on a way to help your children learn what the Bible says

about anger that is age appropriate (such as reading Bible stories together or memorizing a verse). Be prepared to share with your group your experiences from applying these concepts.

8. If you have not already done so, review the five love languages from this chapter, and try to determine the primary love language of your child. Seek opportunities to show love to your child in this love language and observe the impact it makes on anger with your child. (You may also want to purchase a copy of *The Five Love Languages of Children* by Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell to help in this process.)

## **CHAPTER 11: WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY AT GOD**

**Getting Started:** Why do people become angry at God? What are some of the ways people react when angry at Him?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How does God feel about anger, according to the Scriptures presented in this chapter?
2. Hurting people often ask, “Why did God not do something?” What does this chapter share in response to this question?
3. What are the three steps shared for handling anger at God? Which step do you find the most trouble applying in your life? Why do you think this is the case?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

4. When is a time you have been angry at God? What happened? How did that anger affect your walk with God?
5. The last stage of handling anger toward God is to report for duty. Why is this a vital part of the process? How have you experienced this in your life?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

6. Using a Bible concordance or the Web site [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), look up the word *anger*. (You can also just use the Bible stories from this chapter.) Find some occurrences where a person was angry at God and observe how he acted. What principles can you gain for your life from these stories?
7. On a sheet of paper, list some times you have been angry at God. After each listing, write what happened as a result. What patterns

do you see? What is the one most important lesson that has resulted from past anger at God that you can apply today?

## **CHAPTER 12: “I’M ANGRY AT MYSELF”**

**Getting Started:** Why do people become angry at themselves? What are some ways people tend to respond when they are frustrated by their own actions?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Review the section that lists sources of personal anger, “I Know I Can Do Better Than That.” What area do you find most applies to your life? Why do you think this is the case?
2. How do you feel when you do not meet your personal expectations? In what ways can our responses in this area be helpful? Harmful?
3. What are the five responses to personal anger? Why is it important to confront personal anger rather than avoid it?
4. One of the responses to personal anger is to examine it. What are some ways we can examine anger at ourselves?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

5. When are some of the recent times you have become angry at yourself? What started it? In what ways were your responses helpful or unhelpful?
6. During times in which you are angry at yourself, do you tend to show explosive or implosive anger? Why do you think this is the case?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

7. Make a list of some of the issues that cause you the most self-anger. What common factors do you observe? How can you better respond to times when you do cause yourself anger?

8. If you have areas where you have failed to forgive yourself, take some time alone with God to confess your personal failures and move on toward positive actions.
9. Write down John 13:35 from your favorite Bible translation and spend time memorizing it over the next week.

## **CHAPTER 13: CONFRONTING AN ANGRY PERSON**

**Getting Started:** Think of a recent film or book in which you have seen an angry person's actions affecting the people around him. How did it make the people around him feel?

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The opening of this chapter shares a story of Dr. Chapman dealing with an angry gentleman regarding his car muffler. In what ways did "slowing down" his response help the outcome of the situation?
2. Review the seven steps to dealing with an angry person. How were they applied in Dr. Chapman's story with the man's damaged muffler? Which steps were most emphasized in his situation?
3. Why is it so important to emphasize the aspect of listening when encountering someone who is angry? How does listening defuse the other person's anger?

### **THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION**

4. Think of a time someone responded to your anger by listening and assisting with the situation. How did his or her response help change your attitude?
5. Consider a time you mirrored the behavior of an angry person. How did this escalate the situation? Looking back, how could you have responded differently?

### **OPTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

6. Recall an angry person you have recently encountered. On a piece of paper, list the seven steps listed in this chapter along with responses you could have used in the situation. Use this "review session" to

- help prepare for your response the next time you encounter someone who is upset.
7. Outside of your group, share the information from this chapter with another person as an opportunity to discuss ideas for better handling angry people.