

# **Freedom From Exploding and Imploding**



**Freedom From the Causes and Damaging  
Effects of Vented Rage and Stuffed Anger**

*By Chris Simpson*

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Few things in the world are as awesome as an erupting volcano. When incredibly hot gases and elements heat up under the earth's surface, the built-up pressures explode upward with torrents of burning lava that destroys everything in its path. At other times, the pressures under the ground will seep to the surface in the form of geysers and hot springs instead of a single eruption. Such displays of unleashed energy in nature serve to illustrate how we often deal with the problem of anger in our life.

### Anger - A Common Struggle

In regard to handling anger, there tends to be two kinds of people in the world: those who suddenly (and often without warning) explode with fury like an erupting volcano, and those who allow anger to seep through their personality most of the time. While almost everyone struggles with anger to some degree, some contend with it far more than others. When we read the Bible we find that even Jesus got angry at times, the only difference being that His was a righteous indignation. Few things incensed the Lord as much as hypocrisy and self righteousness. In our case, however, most of the anger we experience can usually be traced to stuffed, denied or genuine hurt. In fact, many times anger is the first response you'll often feel when one of three things happen:

- 1) when your rights are violated.
- 2) when your principles are infringed.
- 3) when your space is invaded.

Much is written in the book of Proverbs on the subject of anger:

- \* *"An angry man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated."* (Proverbs 14:17)
- \* *"He that is slow to anger has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly."* (Proverbs 14:29)

\* *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* (Proverbs 15:1)

\* *“A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.”* (Proverbs 15:18)

\* *“Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”* (Proverbs 16:32)

\* *“A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”* (Proverbs 19:19)

\* *“An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.”* (Proverbs 29:22)

### Anger Transfers Easily

Anger transfers easily between people. You have undoubtedly been in a situation, perhaps at work or at home, where someone vented their anger on you about a person or a circumstance and you wound up angry as well. Then, before you knew it, you found yourself venting on someone else the anger you picked up from the first person.

Loosely-vented anger tends to spread like wildfire. And it continues to spread until someone refuses to allow it to transfer onto them and refuses to pass it onto someone else. Since anger is more often ‘caught’ than ‘taught,’ it’s wise to follow Solomon’s command in the Proverbs: *“Do not make friends with an angry man, and do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get a snare to your soul.”* (Proverbs 22:24-25)

## Anger is Often Just Expressed Hurt

Anger is really *expressed hurt*. When anger flares up, it's a signal telling you that there's something wrong inside. The anger itself is often not the real problem. Rather, it's usually an indicator that there are areas of the soul that have not yet been brought under the authority of God's grace. Certain attitudes, tendencies or demonic strongholds — places where Satan has a hold because of unresolved past hurts — may be the real cause behind a lot of the anger we experience. Past hurts are often left hidden because of the pain involved in getting free. So, to avoid the unpleasant task of dealing with the past, many seek to put it all behind them. In this way they hope that the old feelings of rejection and abandonment won't have any affect on their present life.

Unfortunately, that just doesn't happen. We are very much the products of our past experiences. And God wants us to deal honestly with our past. In fact, He often allows situations to occur that trigger the old hurts that are hidden inside. When an old emotional wound surfaces, an opportunity arises to deal with the past once and for all. All that's usually needed is to forgive the one who brought on the hurt and to resolve to keep on forgiving every time the hurt comes back up. True forgiveness shifts the heart's focus from the hurt to Calvary's cross, where deep emotional peace can always be found.

Feelings of hurt and rejection bring pressures to the soul. People generally do one of two things with such pressure: either they let it explode on those around them or they stuff it and try to deny it's there. The 'exploder' causes damage to others while the 'imploder' causes damage to himself. To illustrate, let's consider examples from the Bible of both exploders and imploders.

### Example of an "Exploder"

We find the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. After running off and spending his share of his father's inheritance on riotous living, the boy ended up feeding swine in a pigpen. That quickly brought him to his senses. He then went home fully expecting his father's rejection. Much to his surprise, however, his father threw a 'welcome home' party instead! His older brother (the real prodigal in the story) was out in the field at the time. We're told:

*“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’*

*“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’*

*“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” (Luke 15:25-32)*

Notice: the older brother did not say, “my brother” to his father, but rather, “this son of yours!” He also let his father know that his son, “....squandered his property with prostitutes.” I’m sure he felt that tossing in a little gossip would help strengthen his case. His father, however, didn’t listen to his subtle slander. Instead, he tried to get him to take his eyes off himself and see that this was a joyous occasion. His younger brother was home! It was indeed right to rejoice!

## The Root Causes of an Exploder's Anger

Think of anger as a red flag exposing hidden things underneath. The older brother obviously had many deceptions and attitudes hiding under his anger. For example:

\* *Perceived favoritism*: he believed his father cared more for his brother than himself.

\* *Perceived stinginess*: he judged his dad as being stingy. He said in effect, "You're quite generous with my brother but you're stingy with me."

\* *Perceived rejection*: a deep root of his anger was fear that his father might be rejecting him. Not knowing his father's love and acceptance, he struggled with resentment, judgment and a self-righteous attitude.

\* *Religious pride*: he saw himself as better than his brother when he said to his father, "I've never failed you....I've always obeyed you."

\* *Bitterness and judgment against his brother*: he'd apparently been judging his younger brother ever since he ran off. Could his comment about his brother's excesses reveal a little jealousy on his part, since he was the one left stuck on the farm? If such a secret sin was there, he kept it well hidden under a cloak of self-righteous piety.

Exploding anger is always a clear sign of problems within. Once you realize this, anger loses its ability to control your life. And, as you deal with the underlying causes, anger becomes less and less a difficulty.

## Example of an “Imploder”

Have you ever heard of someone referred to as ‘nice and nervous’? On the surface they may be quite pleasant, yet inside they’re seething with anger. In fact, stuffed anger and resentment can be quite self-destructive, often manifesting through various physical infirmities and diseases. In other words, what’s inside must come out. If internal pressures are not legitimately expressed, they will come out - even if it means through sickness of the body.

Understanding this, however, can bring about healing when no healing can be found. I’ve seen many instances where someone, after facing and dealing with the hurts and rejections of the past, found some infirmity in their life finally healed. It was because they dealt with the source of the sickness: stuffed anger, resentment and bitterness.

Let’s consider the story of Jonah, an ‘imploder’ who tended to stuff, rather than express, his anger. When God told Jonah to cry against the wicked city of Nineveh, he ran the other way right into the belly of a whale! Only then, after three days of excruciating terror, did he come to his senses and decide to obey. All of Nineveh repented as a result. Everyone fasted (even the animals) and besought God to avert judgment. However, instead of rejoicing at his success, Jonah became quite upset that his words of doom did not come to pass! We’re told:

*“But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.”* (Jonah 4:1)

He then complained to the Lord, *“...is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”* (Jonah 4:2-3)

He was mad because things didn't turn out the way he liked. He wanted to see fire and brimstone come down on the wicked Ninevites. But instead, God showed mercy and turned away His judgment.

### A Classic Look at Self-Pity

Jonah is a classic picture of someone with imploded anger. Because he let resentful feelings eat him up inside, his stuffed anger manifested itself into self-pity. He came to the point where he would have preferred to die than face the fact that he didn't get his way. Suicidal people are invariably imploders who've never learned to constructively channel their anger. When feelings of frustration have nowhere else to go inside a person, however, they'll inevitably find a way out - either through destructive patterns of self-pity, sickness in the body, or even suicidal tendencies. Imploded anger cannot be bottled up forever.

After Jonah's tirade, the Lord asked him a simple question, "*Have you any right to be angry?*" (Jonah 4:4) God wanted Jonah to look at what was going on in his heart, to see where the real problem was. Unfortunately, Jonah didn't even bother to respond. But don't judge him too harshly. Admit it. Isn't it difficult for you, in the midst of feeling sorry for yourself and blaming others, to stop and examine your own faults? When you're stuck in self-pity, everything tends to be everybody else's fault.

### Jonah's Second Flight From God

After ignoring God, let's look what Jonah did next: "*So, Jonah went out and sat on the east side of the city. He made a little booth and sat under the shadow of it until he might see what would become of the city.*" (Jonah 4:5) In other words, he sat there waiting for the fire to come! What he was really doing was running for the

second time! He was so eager for the Ninevites to ‘get theirs’ that he wasn’t even interested in talking with God. You would’ve thought he’d learned his lesson in the whale’s belly.

Yet, how often are we guilty of the same thing - focusing on someone else’s sins and weaknesses, waiting for God to ‘get them’ and straighten them out! The truth is, most of us rarely learn what we need to the first time around either.

Then we’re told: “*The Lord provided a vine that grew up to shade Jonah’s head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine.*” (Jonah 4:6) God is not like you and I (aren’t you glad?). Most of us would have pretty much lost patience with Jonah at this point, but not the Lord. Even in Jonah’s stubborn pride the Lord sought to ease his discomfort and make him feel loved.

### God’s Amazing Dealings With a Stubborn Man

“...do you not realize that the goodness of God leads us to repentance?” (Romans 2:4) The way God deals with us is so different from the way we normally deal with each other. God’s response to someone who’s been stubborn, rebellious and hard-headed is often to bless them all the more! Why? Because He wants to melt their hardened heart with his mercy and kindness. And it works more often than not. To not want to grieve the heart of the good Lord is the best thing to keep a man from evil.

For most, to not do evil simply because it is evil is insufficient incentive for obedience. Remember - even though Adam and Eve knew the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden, they ate of it anyway. But when God’s heart of love touches someone, they find the things of evil becoming increasingly unattractive. Paul said it best when he wrote, “*For the love of Christ constrains us...*” (2 Cor 5:14)

Notice, though, that when given the chance, Jonah did not respond to God's mercy. So, as a result, the Lord allowed some affliction to come his way:

*“But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered.”* (Jonah 4:7)

If someone steadfastly refuses to respond to the goodness and mercy of the Lord, then He has other ways to get their attention. While He'd prefer to bring repentance the gentle way, He loves us too much to let us get away with spurning His graciousness. Paul tells us, *“Behold the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but goodness toward you if you continue in His goodness...”* (Romans 11:22)

So, God permitted a worm to devour Jonah's shady covering that night. This clearly illustrates the consequences of rebellion - losing spiritual protection and covering over your life. But this didn't bring Jonah to repentance. So, the Lord was forced to then bring a hot wind of correction, in hopes that Jonah would repent:

*“When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, ‘It would be better for me to die than to go on living.’”* (Jonah 4:8)

In spite of all this correction, Jonah remained stuck in his suicidal self-pity. Since the devouring worm didn't help Jonah wake up, God allowed the sun (which represents direct judgment) to come down on his head. These verses show the progression of God's dealings with a stubborn soul. When one thing won't work, then the Lord will turn the fire of trials up as high as necessary to bring about repentance.

Mind you, this is NOT God's preferred method of dealing with His children. He'd much rather us turn to Him when we sense the slightest grieving of His Spirit. We're told, *"Though he brings grief, He will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men."* (Lam 3:32-33)

But most of us are pretty hard-headed when it comes to obeying the commands of the Lord in our life. We often tend to require the 'rod of correction' before we'll willingly lie down in the green pastures of God's goodness and mercy! After all this, we find God asking Jonah the exact same thing He asked him before:

*"God then said to Jonah, 'Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?' Jonah then replied, 'I do have a right; I am angry enough to die.'"* (Jonah 4:9)

### How God Finally Got Jonah to Talk

The Lord finally got Jonah to talk to Him! Up to this point he was so caught up in himself that he completely ignored God. Self-pity is like that. It puts you in your own little world where you're oblivious to reality and the feelings of those around you. When Jonah did open up to the Lord, it was only to continue whining about how awful everything was. But at least he was communicating. God wants us to talk to Him even in rebellion because He knows a closed heart will never get free. Once dialogue is going, there's always the chance a glimmer of truth might pierce the hardened heart. Now that God had Jonah's attention, the Lord sought to reason with him:

*"But the Lord said, 'You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right*

*hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?’” (Jonah 10-11)*

If you’ll notice, the Lord affirmed Jonah for the one thing he did that was admirable. God said, “You showed mercy and concern for the vine.” The Lord saw a spark of compassion in an otherwise bitter heart. By affirming Jonah, God was hoping to get his eyes off himself, if for even a moment, so that He could speak truth to his heart.

It’s very difficult for someone stuck in self-pity and stubborn pride to listen to reason. Loving affirmation, however, can crack open virtually any closed door. Once you’ve bypassed a person’s hurt and anger with gentle words of mercy, you’ll invariably find an opportunity to reason with them where moments before it seemed impossible.

Having affirmed Jonah for his mercy and concern, the Lord was hoping that he’d then understand His own mercy and concern for the many thousands who had come to repentance in Nineveh. Unfortunately, the story ends right there with no assurance that Jonah ever did see what the Lord wanted him to see.

So it is with self-pity and the anger that tends to go with it. Until, and unless, someone is really willing to come to a place of repentance and let such attitudes go, it’s doubtful they’ll ever really come to understand the merciful heart of the Lord.

### What to Do With Your Anger

In conclusion, God wants us to know what to do with anger. The Apostle Paul gives the balance between ‘exploding’ and ‘imploding’ in Ephesians: *“Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the*

*devil.*” (Eph 4:26) The answer is: learn to express your anger without using it to control others.

Without realizing it, when many people get angry they manipulate those around them. For instance, in a marriage, if the husband or wife explodes in anger over and over because of some particular thing, their spouse will studiously avoid that issue - to prevent provoking more anger from the other.

Also, parents often let their anger be the thing to keep their children in line. While this may be effective in the short term (the children will behave out of fear), it is quite damaging in the long term (the child will confuse correction with rejection). When the child gets older, he'll invariably perceive God's dealings with him in the same way: confusing divine correction with rejection. This is one reason Paul wrote: *“Fathers, don't be angry with your children, lest they be discouraged. Rather, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21)

Feeling angry is in itself not wrong. It's what you do with your anger that's the problem. The balance is to be real and express the fact of your anger without injuring the one you're expressing it to. Believe it or not, this is possible! And it really isn't as difficult as one might suppose.

Do you tend to spew anger on those around you? God doesn't want you to explode with anger. If you've been an 'exploder', go, humble yourself and ask forgiveness of those on whom you've exploded. Commit yourself to do this whenever you lose your temper.

Do you internalize anger out of guilt feelings and put on a happy face? If you've been an 'imploder', begin to be totally candid with the Lord about how you

really feel. Open your heart and share honestly with Him, even in the areas of secret sin.

Ask God to show you what's behind your anger (rejection, pride, bitterness, unforgiveness, etc.) and bring it quickly to the cross. Furthermore, be willing to open up honestly to those around you. We're told to, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed...*" (James 5:16)

Once you begin dialoguing freely with the Lord in areas where you've been in denial, you'll find it easier and easier to be vulnerable with others. Freedom from damaging anger, however it is expressed, is available to those who earnestly seek it!

**If you are angry,  
don't sin by nursing your grudge.  
Don't let the sun go down with you still angry-  
get over it quickly;  
for when you are angry,  
you give a mighty foothold to the devil.**  
(Ephesian 4:26-27 Living Bible)

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