



Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness

David A. Powlison

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Something that matters to you just isn't right. First you see the problem, then you feel it. It starts with a rush of adrenaline and often a rush of words, but it ends with an overwhelming sense of irritation that impacts how we talk to those we live and work with, complaining, and maybe even a settled bitterness to a person or a group of person. We know anger affects us negatively, but we don't know any other way to respond when life goes wrong.

Good and Angry, a groundbreaking new book from David Powlison, contends that anger is more than a problem to solve. Anger is our complex human response to things we perceive as wrong in a complex world, thus we must learn how to fruitfully and honestly deal with it. Powlison undertakes an in-depth exploration of the roots of anger, moral judgment, and righteous response by looking in a surprising place: God's own anger.

Powlison reminds us that God gets angry too. He sees things in this world that aren't right and he wants justice too. But God's anger doesn't devolve into manipulation or trying to control others to get his own way. Instead his anger is good and redemptive. It causes him to step into our world to make wrongs right, sending his own Son to die so that we can be reconciled. He is both our model for change and our power to change.

Good and Angry sets readers on a path toward a faithful and fruitful expression of anger, in which we return good for evil and redeem wrongs. Powlison offers practical help for people who struggle with irritation, complaining, or bitterness and gives guidance for how to respond constructively when life goes wrong. You, your family, and your friends will all be glad that you read this book.

Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness Details

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From Reader Review Good and Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness for online ebook

Cliff says

This is an excellent book! Powlison lets us know that we all have an anger problem and that it is worse than we think. He shows us what it is, how it effects us, how it damages our relationships, and how to change our destructive patterns. Anger is not evil but our sin-tainted version of it often is. Powlison talks about God's righteous anger and how we are to conform to and reflect His until the day comes when sin is forever banished and anger is no longer needed. Especially helpful is the section at the end of the chapter called: Making it your own. Powlison helps us work through what he has taught us and practically apply the material to our own life.

Eric Molicki says

Powlison has a great gift for conceptualizing and explaining the nuances and implications of Scripture. That is on display here as he tackles a much needed subject that I found personally and pastorally helpful.

Brian says

Everything that Powlison writes is worth reading, but I find him better as an essayist than a book writer. This book ended up being too dense for me but still solid content.

John says

David Powlison's Good and Angry is a powerful book. In the book Powlison dives deep into what anger is and then gets very practical about how to biblically deal with your own anger issues (issues, he assures us, we all have).

From the outset, Powlison makes it clear that anger, while dangerous, can be handled to produce good. "At its core anger is very simple," Powlison says, "It expresses 'I'm against that'" (39). Powlison says that each of us handles anger differently. Some of us freeze over, some of us quietly brood, some of us simmer, some of us explode. Powlison encourages us not to look at the way others mismanage worse than us, but rather, how do we mismanage anger? Each type has their own blind spots.

Powlison then dives into anger itself. Anger is about our displeasure toward something, so what are we displeased with? And why? How are we justified? Unjustified in our anger? And what do I want to happen? Anger is physiological. As embodied beings, anger manifests itself in us physiologically. How is it impacting me when I'm angry?

Powlison then dives into mercy, what he calls a constructive displeasure, or constructive anger. When the constructive displeasure of mercy is functioning as it ought, it has four characteristics: patience (a wonderful

biblical synonym of patience is “forbearance”), forgiveness (which is “mercifully unfair” (80)), charity (a spirit of magnanimity), and constructive conflict (“Mercy is not a free pass. It is an invitation to turn and repent” (94). All of these fundamentally point to the work of God and his righteous response of anger to our rebellion. “The constructive displeasure of mercy means the redemption of the world” (102). Powlison walks through how God’s anger works: through his righteous and holy response to our sin, to him taking his wrath upon his son on the cross. He concludes, “God’s wrath is your hope. God’s wrath is my hope. We don’t often hear that, but it appears everywhere in the Bible. Wrath is our hope because love masters anger” (121).

The final portion of the book steps back and helps us move through analyzing our own anger. Powlison uses James 4:1-12 to help us analyze our own anger issues. At the heart of this analysis is James’s own analysis of his hearer, that they are fighting and quarrelling because of their “desires that battle within” them. In other words, if we have an anger problem (which we all do), we have a malformed desire problem. In other words, we have a heart problem. Significant in digging into this question is the ability to analyze my own motives. The issue isn’t what has happened with me, but is my heart and my heart’s motives and desires in the midst of any given situation. Key questions to ask myself when in a moment of anger are: “what do I want?” “what do I fear?” and “what do I most love?” (154-55).

Powlison concludes with a strong word of hope. God is in the process of changing us and reshaping our heart. Our problem, Powlison says, is that we tend to talk to the wrong person in the midst of our anger – ourselves. But when we turn and talk to our Good Shepherd, we will experience hope and change.

I’m so grateful for this book. It is a profoundly biblical and wise book with both subtle and profound insights. I know I have been impacted by the book personally and will both turn to it in the future for personal use and as a resource for others who struggle with anger.

Sally Ewan says

I heard Powlison on a podcast discussing these concepts, and so I decided to read the book. He points out that anger is not necessarily bad, but is problematic when we respond in anger to the wrong things. It is helpful when angry to ask, "What do I want that I am not getting?" Praise from others? My own way? Ease and comfort? By identifying what we are striving for, we can better assess whether our anger is good or bad.

Alden Groves says

I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Because of chapter 2. Which you'll understand when you read it. We all need to hear these challenging and good words on what anger is in the context of God's creative genius and moral perfection as well as how it is deeply affected by our fallen sinful nature. This book is relevant to everyone. Read it.

Kaitlyn Cotnoir says

I couldn’t gush about this book enough if I tried! So wise, insightful, biblical and deeply helpful. A

comprehensive and redemptive look at anger with practical counselling questions to help you think through the applications for your own heart. David Powlison is a master in these areas and such a gift to the people of God! Everyone would greatly benefit from reading this book. I will be going back to it often.

David Schultz says

You (and I) have an anger problem - this book changed the way I think about my own annoyances, irritability, and all their anger cousins. I think everyone would be helped by reading this.

Matthew Mitchell says

David Powlison has a unique way of seeing and saying truth. He's both feisty and humble at the same time. In "Good & Angry" David captures both the essence of anger and all of its contours. David is one of the wisest people there is when it comes to understanding how people tick and how the Word of God meets and changes them.

Even the title says so much. I've been reading another pretty good book recently about how not to be personally offended, and I've been helped very much by it. But the author basically argues away the concept of righteous anger as a self-justifying fiction. Powlison, alternatively, would see anger redeemed and gives us biblical categories for understanding good anger (i.e. "the constructive displeasure of mercy"). Yet at the same time, Powlison never excuses sinful anger and constantly offers helpful counsel for change.

Not only does he break new ground, but he does it with gentleness and grace. He writes as one struggler to other fellow strugglers, and it feels like a personal conversation. I can hear his voice in every sentence. This book is biblical counseling at its best written by one of its leading theorists and practitioners.

Kevin Thompson says

This is one of those books that I'd like to say I read for a friend... But, anger is an issue that has been in my family probably as long as it has been in existence. So, it's easy to excuse it away. Not only does it come natural, it just seems right. Getting angry, at its core, is a fight against injustice, so of course I'm going to get angry. But, in the past few months the Lord has been convicted me of this sin that pushes away others and builds up my own pride. With all of this in mind, I was excited about the chance to review Good and Angry for all of you.

I was disappointed in the book. It's not what I thought it would be. I was looking for some practical tips of how to control the rage that sometimes bubbles up within me. I was looking for ways to keep myself under control when everything inside of me wants to be out of control. This was not that book.

Yet, what I found was that while this was not the book I wanted, it was indeed the book I needed. Good and Angry taught me that my whole concept of anger needed to change. For so long I have viewed anger as some sort of foreign entity that somehow resides in my body and from time to time surges up. I was looking to control and force. Yet, now I am coming to understand that anger is not something merely within me, it is me!

Powlison writes, “Usually angry people and those who give them advice focus on only one part of what is going on in anger. And, curiously, the part they focus on is not you. Anger becomes something that is happening to you or in you. You deal with “it,” or harness “it,” or liberate “it,” or manage “it,” or rid yourself of “it.” But you are not intrinsically responsible for “it.” “It” is going on inside of you, but you aren’t doing it... One key to getting anger straight is to understand that when you are angry, you are doing something. Anger is not an “it.” Anger is not just one part of you. Anger does not “happen” to you. You do anger.”

That one little paragraph changed my entire perspective on anger and how I deal with my sin. This entire book is a game-changer. Very few books blow me away, but this one did for sure. Good and Angry breaks apart the DNA of anger and helps us to see it at a basic level which then allows us to see its cause and core. Then, Powlison takes on a journey to see anger not as a problem, but as an attribute of God meant for good. Yes, anger can be a good thing when put in the right perspective with the right motive. Anger does not have to lead to sin, though we are so accustomed to only think of it from that perspective. Actually, patience and mercy may flow from the angry heart.

While Good and Angry does not offer tips such as counting to ten or punching a pillow, the book is filled with practical tips that will challenge your assumptions and take you the Word of God to see God’s intent and design. This book was convicting on a deep level, but left me encouraged and inspired to rethink how I approach this entire subject. I cannot recommend this book enough.

Disclaimer: This book was provided by the publisher for review. I was under no obligation to offer a favorable review.

Jordan Shirkman says

Insanely challenging, convicting, practical and re-orienting. I can’t imagine a person who wouldn’t benefit from this. Filled with gospel gut punches and lots of reflection questions to work through.

Not a book you can just breeze through, even at its appropriate length. I’ll be referencing and using the paradigms in here for years to come.

Luke Evans says

Best thing I've read on anger

Ricky Garcia says

I really enjoyed this book. Author David Powlison does a wonderful job describing good and bad anger. His theological discussion on why we get angry is spot on and he gives good biblical advice to help the reader express good anger. If you’re a person who counsels others in a professional or ministerial setting, then I do believe you would benefit greatly from reading this practical book about being good and angry. The only reason I didn’t give it 5 stars is because I felt it could have been a bit shorter and still just as good.

Tony Reinke says

My endorsement:

Between 1995 and 2006 David Powlison published five weighty journal articles that profoundly deepened (and challenged) my thinking on anger, and those articles, gathered up and Xerox copied many times over, have served for years as my top recommendation to friends and inquirers struggling with anger, and struggling to discover its many diverse and sometimes subtle roots. Those articles, once scattered in journals, have finally been collected, reworked, and expanded into a fresh new book. It is rather rare to have a 20-year history behind a commendation of a new book, but **Good and Angry** by Powlison now takes its rightful place as my number one recommendation on anger, not to mention it now stands as the fullest and wisest Christian response to the subtheme of self-hatred and self-anger I have ever read.

Robin says

This book on anger took me a while to get through. It is detailed, intense and practical on the ins and outs of our anger (including a complaining spirit and bitterness--which is simmering anger), our anger at God and even when we are angry at ourselves. The questions at the end of each chapter help unpack our heart and the chapter on eight questions to get to the root of our anger was very helpful. This is a great book and in my opinion, the best book on the subject of how to look at our anger biblically.
