

# Letting Go of Anger and Bitterness

30-DAY PRAYER & SCRIPTURE GUIDE

EXCERPTS FROM *LOVE SLOWS DOWN: HOW TO KEEP  
ANGER & ANXIETY FROM RUINING LIFE'S RELATIONSHIPS*

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# Day 1: Why Do I Get So Angry?

## VERSE

“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

—James 1:19–20, ESV

### **Anger. Frustration. Irritation.**

We all feel it from time to time. Sometimes it just explodes—at our kids, our spouse, our co-workers—and we wonder if there’s something dark lurking inside us.

When you get angry at something happening to you, it’s always because of something happening inside you. Anger isn’t a sin. It’s just a sign. When you get angry, you decide whether you will use it to harm or see it as a sign that something inside you needs to be dealt with.

The Apostle James gives a solid formula for what to do when we get angry. Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. When we get angry, we have to slow down and make sure we don’t do anything we regret. Take a deep breath. Step away from the situation (if you can). Say a prayer. Calm yourself down.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I know that I sometimes get angry. I don’t want to hurt the people around me with my behavior. Please grant me the wisdom to understand what might be causing my anger and help me to turn it over to you.

Amen

# Day 2: Where Anger Comes From

## VERSE

“BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FOR LOVE IS FROM GOD, AND WHOEVER LOVES HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD AND KNOWS GOD.”

—1 JOHN 4:7, ESV

**“Why do I get so angry?”** The simple answer is this: You get angry because you have some hopes and dreams for yourself and your family, but all around you are threats to those dreams.

There are three specific hopes and dreams that we all have. We want:

- Security: (physical, financial, emotional)
- Connection: (relationships, feeling valued and accepted)
- Control: (Empowerment, choices, and options)

Anger comes when we feel a threat to those three things. We were made to need those things. But only God’s love can give us the perfect fulfillment of them. Our spouse, kids, job, what we have, and who we know will never provide perfect security, connection, and control. Only God’s love can do that.

When we get angry and control the anger, it can actually be used as a force for good. Anger can point us to areas of our life where we are looking for what we need in something other than God’s love.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I long to live fully surrendered to you, but I recognize that I sometimes try to resolve circumstances on my own. Help me to surrender everything—my family, my hopes, my dreams, and even my fears—to you.

Amen

# Day 3: Reaction Warnings

## VERSE

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” —Proverbs 15:1, NIV

**Anger causes us to react to what is threatening us.** But reacting can lead to some serious regret later on.

When we get angry, brain energy shifts from your prefrontal cortex (the problem-solving part of your brain) to your cortex (the “primal” part). At that point, all rational and reasonable thought basically shuts down. So we have to step away to calm down and begin thinking straight again. We need to develop a plan for how we will choose to respond to situations that make us angry. Then we will be less likely to simply react.

Take a moment right now to think about how you can calm yourself down in a healthy way when you get angry or irritated—through prayer, breathing deeply, or taking a walk.

Write down today’s **Verse** and keep it handy. When you start feeling angry, read the **Verse** a few times, then calm yourself down in a healthy way.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Please help me to recognize what might be causing my anger. I want to be patient and loving toward those around me, so please help me slow down before I say anything that may cause harm to someone I care about. Calm any restlessness in my spirit and help me to trust you in the uncertainty.

Amen

## Day 4: Tame the Lion

### VERSE

“The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.” —Proverbs 15:14, ESV

**I was a few cars back at a stoplight recently.** The light turned green, but nobody moved. I patiently waited for 1.7 seconds, then I laid on my horn. *Why are we not moving?!* The guy in front of me offered a conciliatory gesture with his middle finger. I kept honking. Then I saw it: an older gentleman was rolling across the intersection as fast as he could in a wheelchair.

I felt foolish. I didn't have all the facts; I just reacted. I felt a threat to my sense of control over the situation. Laying on that horn made me feel like I was doing something—back in control—but I regretted it in the end.

I've learned the hard way that it's best to approach situations that are making us angry like a paranoid cat—cautiously, tiptoeing, with eyes wide open. Assume there is something happening behind the scenes that we don't realize. You can turn into a lion later, if needed. But if you go in roaring like a lion without all the facts, you could end up looking really foolish or make the situation even worse by creating more anger in those around you.

When you feel yourself getting angry today, rather than react, start asking questions. *What am I not understanding about this situation?* You'll probably find there are some details you didn't understand. But if things really are what you thought, you'll be able to approach it from a place of calm and peace, and you'll have a much better chance of resolving the situation.

# Day 4: Tame the Lion

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

In my humanness, I want to control things. I want the answer now. I want to keep moving forward. Waiting and uncertainty make me feel helpless and out of control. And in those moments, I sometimes behave poorly. Help me to accept the pauses and recognize that you may be at work—even though I cannot see it.

Amen

# Day 5: Using Anger for Good

## VERSE:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” —Ephesians 4:31, NIV

**There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible.** Anger shows up by chapter four. Anger kicked in right after Adam and Eve were removed from Eden. Their sons Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God, but God rejected Cain’s offering. Cain got angry. God warned Cain that if he didn’t properly manage his anger he was in serious danger. His anger pointed to something deep within him that needed to be dealt with. At that moment, Cain had a choice to use his anger for good or evil.

Anger is just a sign that something needs to be addressed. It can be used for good or evil. Jesus got angry. At one point, He stormed through the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem overturning tables. He was angry about how the religious leaders were abusing people. That was righteous anger. That’s the kind of anger that’s a force to confront injustice and defend the oppressed. You’ve probably felt anger at injustice. When you saw someone humiliated. Watched a child being emotionally or physically abused. Saw someone taking advantage of the poor. Seeing these things makes you want to take action. Like Jesus, we *should* get angry when we see injustice, and when it’s within our power to do something, we should act. That is truly righteous anger. Righteous anger is real, but it’s rare.

I’ve manhandled a few tables in my time, but I can’t say it was because I was standing up for the weak. Hardly. It was because I had unmet expectations or felt a threat to my security, connection, or control. Can you relate?

The Apostle Paul said, “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” When we get angry at situations that threaten our security, connection, or control, it tends to

# Day 5: Using Anger for Good

lead to unrighteous anger, bitterness, and all the other things Paul mentions in that **Verse**. But anger can also be used for good.

Anger is just a sign that we need to pay attention to what's happening in our emotions. When we get angry, it's a chance to learn a little bit about the deeper parts of our emotions. It can actually lead us to understand ourselves better.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Sometimes it feels good to be angry. But I recognize that not all anger is used for good. Test my spirit and help me to recognize what is behind my anger. Help me to see the areas where you are trying to stretch and grow me.

Amen



# Day 6: Know Your Triggers

## **VERSE:**

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” —Psalm 139:23, NIV

**Anger isn't a sin; it's just a sign.** And when you see a sign, you need to pay attention because the sign is trying to tell you something important.

When we start getting angry about not getting our security, connection, or control met from someone or something around us, it's a sign pointing us to an area we need to surrender to God—the only one who can really meet that need.

To calm anger before it starts, we need to know what consistently makes us angry. Thomas à Kempis said, “A humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning.” When we know what makes us angry, we can immediately turn to God and look to Him.

That's what King David was talking about in today's **Verse** when he said, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” (Psalm 139:23, NIV)

Keep a piece of paper handy today and whenever you feel yourself getting angry—after you calm down—write down what was happening when you started getting angry. Then pray for God's help as you remember that He is the only one who can give you everything you really want and need.

# Day 6: Know Your Triggers

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Please search my heart and mind. Help me to recognize triggers in my life that I perceive as a threat to my security, connection, or control. And when you open my eyes to see those areas, help me to have a humble spirit that is willing to surrender that area to you. For you are the source of my peace, and I love to live in that peace **Daily**.

Amen

# Day 7: You've Gotta Express It

## VERSE:

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”  
—Ephesians 4:26, NIV

**Sometimes we think that to be a loving person we just have to absorb or passively accept what bothered us and never say anything about it.** But you can speak the truth about how something bothered you and still be loving and forgiving. The key is that you need to decide beforehand that you'll forgive and let it go, even if they respond negatively when you share how an action affected you.

If you don't express your anger in a healthy way, it will just build—like a volcano. When it builds, it threatens to explode in ways that can cause major harm.

When the Apostle Paul says, “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold”, (Ephesians 4:26, NIV) he's talking about the importance of expressing anger correctly so that it doesn't cause harm or let resentment build. When we take the time to process our anger and express it in a calm, non-harmful way, we will find the peace of God entering our hearts and minds.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Grant me the confidence to effectively and clearly communicate to those around me when something is upsetting to me. I do not want to allow frustration or anger to develop into something more damaging. I want all of my actions to be pleasing to you.

Amen

# Day 8: Get to the Heart of the Issue

## VERSE:

“The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.” —Proverbs 20:5, NIV

**Deep within us, like water in an underground well, are emotions that we might have to dig a little deeper to find.** Anger is a secondary emotion, but to properly express it we have to express what we felt right before we got angry with words like embarrassed, ignored, attacked, and belittled.

When you feel yourself getting angry, take some time to calm down and figure out what you felt right before you got angry. Express that emotion. “I felt \_\_\_\_\_.” Don’t blame. Just express how it made you feel before you felt anger. Remember, they probably didn’t intend to make you mad. If your kids aren’t old enough to process what you’re saying, you may just need to be content with a little more self-knowledge. But armed with that knowledge, you can use that skill to help your kids process their own emotions of anger.

Don’t let your anger build into something destructive. Stay calm, choose your words carefully, and express what you felt right before you got angry. Release the pressure. Then replace that feeling with forgiveness.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Open my eyes and allow me to clearly see myself and the things that may cause my anger. Help me to acknowledge what’s going on inside of me so that I may grow from it.

Amen

# Day 9: Get a Game Plan

## VERSE:

“The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.” —Proverbs 22:3, NIV

**Before we bought our home, we hired an inspector who gave us a full report of potential issues with the house.** Based on his consultation, we knew what we needed to watch for. Like that inspector, anger can be a great personal consultant. It can show you what root causes—threats to your security, connection, and control—tend to create problems for you.

When you know those root causes, you can develop a plan for how to prepare and stay calm when you get into situations that could potentially trigger your anger.

If I know I’m going to hit heavy traffic (and my wife won’t be in the car wanting quality time together), I have an audiobook cued up.

When I’m going to the doctor, I clear my entire schedule for the day and that evening. (Not really, but sometimes it feels like I should!)

If I know I’m going to miss a meal, I bring a snack so I don’t get “hangry.”

When I know I’m going to talk to certain people (or see their posts on social media), I prepare myself for what they might say that could make me mad.

I prepare things the night before to lessen the craziness of trying to get the family out the door in the morning.

When I’ve been paying attention to my anger and know what situations in the past got me angry, I’m much less prone to getting irritated. You’ll need to do the same.

King Solomon said, “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep

## Day 9: Get a Game Plan

going and pay the penalty.” (Proverbs 22:3, NIV) You can avoid danger when you have a game plan prepared beforehand.

Take some time today to think back on what has irritated you recently or made you angry. What could you do to prepare yourself so that the next time you are in a similar situation, you'll be able to keep yourself calm? It may be as simple as giving yourself a mental pep-talk. Do whatever it takes to plan how you are going to cut anger off at the pass. You can do this!

### TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Please help me to guard my heart, mind, and emotions every day. Just as I prepare ahead for Daily tasks, help me also to pray ahead over the things that may trigger anger or frustration and help me to come up with ways to avoid those triggers.

Amen

# Day 10: Consult Your Anger

## VERSE:

“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” —Proverbs 2:6, NIV

**When you learn to control your anger, it can actually give you insight into areas of your life that you may need to surrender to God and His love.** Like a consultant that helps point out areas where a business or organization can improve, anger can point to areas of your life where you are living short of what God has for you.

When you get angry, once you’ve calmed yourself down, see if you can connect it to feeling threatened in security, connection, or control. Keep track of your angry moments and you’ll start to see a pattern.

When you know patterns of what makes you angry, you can either avoid those kinds of situations or, if you can’t avoid the situation, you can go in mentally prepared. (I always have to give myself a pep talk before driving in rush-hour traffic.)

Know your triggers and you’ll soon find your angry episodes will become fewer and fewer. And in the process, you’ll be looking to God more—the true source of your security, connection, and control.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I don’t want to be an angry person—or even a nice person who is sometimes angry. But I know that there are things in **Daily** life that can drive me crazy and to the point of being angry. Help me to understand what causes my anger. And help me to **Daily** surrender all of my thoughts to you.

Amen

# Day 11: Keeping the Water Pure

## VERSE:

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” —Proverbs 4:23, NIV

**When I lead Summit Leaders teams into the wilderness for multi-day hikes, one of the biggest challenges to keeping the team healthy is making sure we have clean drinking water.** Getting pure water can be a challenge in nature.

So I always bring a really expensive, top-of-the-line water purification filter with us. It removes pretty much anything in the water that can harm you. Every night the team sits around in a circle, and we take turns pumping pure water for the next day.

We need to do a similar process every day in our lives. We need to spend a little time each day filtering out the offenses, frustrations, and anger we experienced that day. We don't want those tainted waters polluting us.

King Solomon talked about how important it is to keep the streams of your heart flowing pure and untainted. Take some time every day to slow down and acknowledge what hurt or angered you and choose to release it. Don't let it build up into bitterness or resentment.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Please create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me. Please keep my heart pure so that I am unable to build up bitterness or resentment.

Amen



# Day 12: Deal with the Fear

## VERSE:

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”  
—1 John 4:18, ESV

**Whenever you feel anger, you can be certain that there is fear behind it.**

Adam and Eve felt fear when sin separated them from God. Shortly after that, we see anger appear in the life of their sons Cain and Abel. The sequence is always fear, then anger.

So to really deal with anger, you’ve got to confront the deep fears we all have of not getting the security, connection, or control we want and need. God created us to get our basic needs met in His love. If we are looking for our spouse, our job, who we know, what we have, or what we do to give us that perfect fulfillment, it will always lead to more anxiety and anger. Only God’s love can fulfill our deepest needs. Only His love can drive out fear and anger.

Anger is a powerful force that, if we channel it correctly, can bring awareness to the areas of our lives where we are looking for fulfillment from something other than God. It can actually drive us to seek His love. Anger is a sign. Use it to help you see those areas of your life where you are living in fear and aren’t walking in the fullness of all God has for you.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to recognize where my anger comes from. With your guidance, help me get it under control. Through this process, please provide me with a better understanding of myself and the areas in which I need to put you first in my life. Only your love will provide me with the security I seek.

Amen

# Day 13: Making Space for Peace

## VERSE:

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” —Colossians 3:15, NIV

**It’s really easy to fall into thinking that everything in life can fit neatly together and give me the perfect ending I want if I just push hard enough.**

All the movies we watch and sermons we hear tend to tie a nice bow on all the drama. “And they all lived happily ever after with sunshine and unicorns.” We start to believe that everything should end perfectly. We want our happily ever after, and we know what it should look like.

Unfortunately, our world is broken. No matter how hard we push or manipulate for our happy ending, there are situations in life that will never fit together perfectly or end how we want them to end. There will be some things we never get closure on. We can’t change the past. We can’t change what happened. There are some things we’re facing right now that we can’t change. We can throw a fit, or we can accept this truth and work with what we have. When we embrace what is without stubbornly holding on to an obsession with everything being like we want it to be, then we can let it go. And letting it go creates space for love and peace to rule in our hearts and minds.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I’m tired of holding on to an ideal that isn’t real. Instead, I want to live the life you want for me. I want to live in a place of peace where I am covered under the protection of your wings. Help me live with my hands open—seeking only you.

Amen

# Day 14: The Path to Glory

## VERSE:

“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” —Proverbs 19:11, NIV

**We live in a world filled with people.** And when you hang around people, sooner or later you’ll end up getting bumped into, mistreated, ignored, or just plain abused. There’s no way around it. Again, there are some things we can’t control. But there is always something we can control: our response to what happens.

That’s why wise King Solomon said, “It is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.” We’re impressed with people who stay calm when they’re being attacked or mistreated. We all love being around folks who don’t take things personally or get upset at off-handed comments or slow drivers. Those are the kinds of people who are fun to be with. That’s the glory Solomon is talking about. The ability to let go of the small things and not take them personally will make you stand out. It actually makes you look good. Nothing is quite as impressive as someone who can take a few hits and keep moving forward with a smile on their face.

Moving forward is what letting go is really all about. When you decide to let go, you’re making a decision to move ahead and put the past behind you. All we have is today.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

There are so many things around me that can distract me and can lead to anger. Social media. News headlines. Circumstances out of my control. In these moments, Father, help me to focus on what is true and noble. Help me to guard my tongue and my mind and not engage in foolishness that will only lead to hurt. Help me to be a peacemaker.

Amen

# Day 15: Keep the Water Untainted

## VERSE:

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” —Proverbs 4:23, NIV

**I took a team rafting on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon a few years back.** When we started, the river was crystal-clear. But two miles into the trip our guide pointed to the right. “Looks like the Paria is running. Say goodbye to the clear water.”

I looked ahead and saw a stream of brown water flowing into our nice, clean river. In no time, the entire river was brown and milky, and it stayed that way for the rest of the six-day trip. That one tiny stream miles upriver turned the crystal-clear Colorado into a cloudy mess.

King Solomon said, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” A pure heart leads to pure love. But if we aren’t careful, offense, betrayal, disappointment, or failure can taint the pure waters of our hearts and leave us jaded and cynical. The longer we hold on to the offenses, the more tainted the waters will be. When we choose to let go of the offense, it clears the way to love from a pure heart.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I know that this world is not my home. Yet so many things in this world can cause me to feel helpless and frustrated. They invade my thoughts and try to attack how I live and love. Protect me from the things that may harm me. Help me to guard my heart and keep it centered upon you.

Amen

# Day 16: Don't Open the Door to Resentment

## VERSE:

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” —Ephesians 4:31, NIV

**In both Spanish and French, the word *sentir* means “to feel.”** When we “re-sent,” we feel the pain of the hurt over and over. If we don't let go of resentment, it can have some disastrous results. Ongoing resentment has the potential to hurt us worse than the original hurt. Resentment builds when we hold on to past injustices and keep reliving them in our minds.

When resentment grows, anger builds. Our anger can turn into an out-of-control wildfire. It can get to a point where we just want to watch the whole world burn. Anyone who resembles the person who hurt us becomes a target for our anger. We may harbor anger at an entire race, gender, or society all because of something one person did to us. The pain becomes our obsession as we keep reliving the hurt.

When we choose to release the anger and forgive the person who hurt us, not only are we walking in obedience to God, but we are also doing ourselves a favor. We set the prisoner free and realize that we were the one behind bars. Forgiveness brings freedom!

Who in your life do you need to forgive? Take time to meditate on that and maybe even make a list. In your quiet times with God, seek His help in granting people forgiveness.

# Day 16: Don't Open the Door to Resentment

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

In your prayer you instruct us to forgive others. It sounds so simple, but sometimes it can be so hard. Reveal to me, Father, anyone that I need to forgive. Please don't allow bitterness to envelop me. I want to be free to love others and and be an example of you.

Amen

# Day 17: The Truth About Forgiveness

## VERSE:

“Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’” —Luke 23:34, NIV

**It’s hard to forgive.** But it’s even harder when we believe some common myths about what forgiveness looks like. Here’s one myth we tend to believe:

### **Myth 1: I can forgive once they admit what they did.**

Jesus debunked this myth and gave us a great example. As He was dying, He said, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” He forgave before anyone even realized they needed it. You may never hear a confession from the people who’ve hurt you. They may never choose to acknowledge their guilt. If the person who hurt you is a parent who has passed away or a criminal who was never caught, it’s simply not possible to seek a confession. In many cases, it’s dangerous and unwise to confront the person who hurt you.

The great news is that you don’t need the other person to acknowledge their guilt before you can forgive them. The power is in your hands right here and now. Forgiveness is your choice. It has nothing to do with whether or not the other person admitted their guilt. You don’t have to wait for them. You were a victim of someone hurting you, but don’t stay a victim. Don’t let victimhood be your identity. You are way more than what happened to you. You have power to break free from being a victim by letting go and forgiving right now—even if they never admit what they did.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I don’t want to be a victim or live with that mindset. Help me to forgive those in my life who have offended me and/or caused me harm. Some may not even know they have hurt me. Give me the love to forgive them and grant me the courage, when needed, to seek their forgiveness for holding a grudge against them.

Amen.

# Day 18: Forgiveness Doesn't Depend on Feelings

## VERSE:

“‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” —2 Corinthians 6:2, NIV

Another myth we tend to believe that can keep us from walking in forgiveness is this:

### **Myth 2: I’ll know when it’s time to forgive. It’ll feel right.**

I hate to break it to you, but that feeling is never going to come. This would be equivalent to deciding to get into shape and saying, “I’ll just know when it’s time to go to the gym. I’ll feel it.” Not likely. There will always be other, more appealing options—like nursing your wounds and continuing to think about the bad things that person did to you. The truth is that the feeling will follow the action. You’ll get the positive feelings you’re looking for only after you choose to forgive. And even then, it might take some time. But trust me—it will come. Right now is always the right time to forgive. God wants to give you the grace right now, today. Today is the day of salvation from the weight of unforgiveness.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to be a forgiving person. I know that every day I hold on to anger or bitterness is a day I miss living in the peace you have for me. Grant me a true joy that comes only from living the life you have for me ... one of love and forgiveness.

Amen



# Day 19: Remembering with Forgiveness

## **VERSE:**

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow....” Isaiah 1:18, KJV

Another common myth of forgiveness is this:

### **Myth 3: Forgive and forget.**

You cannot forgive and forget. It is impossible. Your mind is too powerful to simply forget. It always remembers. If you spend your life trying to forget a hurt, thinking this is true forgiveness, you'll live in constant guilt and condemnation. But there is no condemnation in Christ. We don't forgive and forget; we forgive and choose to remember with forgiveness.

Today, rather than trying to forget what was done to you, think back to the situation and imagine God covering it with a blanket of His grace. Forgive and look at the situation with forgiveness. It may take a while, but if you'll walk in forgiveness and remind yourself of the decision, sooner rather than later, you'll look back and feel only peace.

## **TODAY'S PRAYER**

Heavenly Father,

Because your Son died on the cross for my sins, I live as a new life. Help me to forgive those in my life who have hurt me. And as I forgive them, increase my love for them.

Amen

# Day 20: Love Is Flexible

## VERSE:

“Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” —Matthew 9:17, NIV

**Jesus said you can’t put new wine into old wineskins.** Back in the day, wine was held in dried animal skins. But after a while, the old wineskins got brittle and hard. New wine is always expanding. It will push and press. If the container isn’t flexible or doesn’t leave room for growth, it will break.

Real love is constantly expanding and welcoming the new. If we get too attached to an old framework or how it used to be, we’re prone to miss what God wants to do now. Or worse, we might just become angry and resentful over the new work—not realizing that it’s actually God’s work.

God never changes, but He often works in new, creative ways. We can’t get hung up on our ideal of how things should be based on how they were in the past. We have to be willing to embrace what is—right now.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

It’s easy to get stuck in a way of thinking or acting, and easier still to close oneself off from others. Help me to stop doing that. Help me to be a person who embraces where you have placed me in this moment and help me to be open to loving others—just as they are.

Amen

# Day 21: Freedom in Reality

## VERSE:

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1, KJB

**I’ve had lots of parents ask me to intervene in conflicts they’re having with their kids.** They want their kids to follow in their footsteps by taking over the family business, going to a certain school, or pursuing a certain path in life. They had a positive experience, and they want their kids to have one too. So they pressure and manipulate their kids. They hold on to their ideal so strongly that they create division.

If you have control issues like me, I know this is hard to believe, but there is freedom in facing the reality of who our kids are, what our life really is, and who we really are. I’m not saying you need to accept it all passively. Some of your reality probably needs to change. But you’ll be able to change it from a place of love when you let go of your expectations and ideals and embrace what is. God knows your situation, and He has the grace you need to walk in peace, right where you are.

There’s a burden and a blessing for every season. Shoulder the burden and embrace the blessing. Stay flexible. Never stop learning. Don’t hold too tightly to sentimental ideals of what it “should be.” Embrace what God is doing right now.

## TODAY’S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to embrace the season you have me in now. Help me to stop fighting and trying to manipulate things to the way I want them; rather, help me to trust you and your plans. Father, I want to embrace what you are doing right now and everything you desire to teach me within this season.

Amen

# Day 22: Fear and Faith

## VERSE:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[a] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” —Romans 8:38-39 NIV

**Anxiety is on the rise like never before.** And when anxiety, worry, and fear are high, those emotions have the power to create havoc and destruction in our personal lives and society.

The good news is that anxiety doesn't have to ruin your life. In fact, you can become an instrument of peace by holding on to a few truths I want to share about how to manage your anxiety in the middle of a world gone mad.

For the record, there are two kinds of madness going on right now, but they are connected.

There's angry madness—people are lashing out and taking to the streets to express years of pent up rage.

But that kind of madness is the result of another kind of madness—the insanity that happens when we are driven by fear.

We start managing our fear by recognizing that “neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,[a] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

That love gives us the courage to move forward and live our lives, despite fear.

# Day 22: Fear and Faith

We can't just sit around and wait for fear to go away. It won't. It has to be faced. When you face the thing you fear in small doses, God sustains you, and it builds your faith. But you have to take the steps of faith first.

Which is why fear and faith aren't opposites. Fear is just faith that bad things will happen. Faith is believing that God's love is available in a real way to comfort and encourage us. But that kind of faith requires action. Faith is stepping into the uncertainty based solely in our confidence in God's love.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for loving me. Thank you for being greater than any fears I may possess. Help me to walk in faith—to be willing to trust you in the areas of my life like my finances, family relationships, and my work, where fear may creep in. Help me to remember that nothing can separate me from your love.

Amen

# Day 23: Letting Go

## VERSE:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!” —2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

**Most of the people who go on expeditions with me have never done a major hike before.** This is what I want. I’m not looking for people who are all wildernessy and willing to chop off their arm with a Swiss Army knife to survive. Those people would be really out of place on my teams. (Plus, I don’t want them around—they’ll make me look like a wimp!)

Because the people in my groups are all first-timers, they’re usually really concerned about having the correct gear. I get tons of texts and emails asking exactly what they should bring. So before our trips, I give them a packing list and have them watch a video I recorded about how to pack for a hike. I show them exactly what I bring. I want them to feel confident without over-packing, but most team members still bring way too much with them. They show up for the hike loaded down with gear.

This is a serious problem.

A pack that’s too heavy will wear you out, and you won’t be able to successfully complete the hike. So the night before we leave for the trail, I’ll often do a gear weigh-in. I set a weight goal for their bags. If it’s too heavy, I have them start pulling stuff out of it.

This process gets highly emotional in a hurry. People get really sensitive about their stuff. As I lighten their load, I can see the fear in their eyes—but I know they’ll get over it. Usually by the second day of the hike, those same people thank me for making them lighten their load. They realize just how hard the hike would have been with all that extra weight.

I’m convinced that nobody intends to overpack. It happens slowly, little by little.

## Day 23: Letting Go

We're afraid of not having something we may need, so we just take everything. It's wise to prepare, but you can't prepare for everything. We end up overloaded and tired. By the way, I'm not talking about packing for a trip anymore. I'm talking about life.

Life is like a long hike, and most of us are walking along with a pack that is way too heavy. We're all doing our best to provide for our families and give them the opportunities we never had. We figure if we can just get a little more, we'll have everything we need. But slowly, little by little, we get overloaded.

Our finances are overloaded. We spend everything we make or more.

Our time is overloaded. Work deadlines, overtime, kids' sports schedules.

Our energy is overloaded. I heard someone say, "The world is run by tired people." Basically, yes.

Like a hiker picking up rocks along the trail, thinking we might need them at some point to throw at a bear or lion, we take on more and more. A lot of what we add to our load is actually good stuff—opportunities, relationships. But as the weight builds, we feel overwhelmed, like we're carrying around a giant pack. We're strong. But not that strong. We end up tired and dreading every day, saying, "Again? I'm tired, and I can't carry all this anymore."

At some point we have to slow down (maybe even stop) and really look at what we're bringing with us. We have to figure out if all the stuff we're carrying is helping us or hindering us in getting to where we want to be. At some point, we have to decide to leave a few things behind.

# Day 23: Letting Go

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I'm holding on to way too many things ... things that are taking my focus from you. Show me the items I need to release to your attention and care. I want to be an open vessel ... someone you can use. Bring me to that place of walking in harmony with your plans for my life.

Amen



# Day 24: Strength Through Solitude

## VERSE:

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength....” —Isaiah 30:15, NIV

### **Solitude is mental stillness.**

That’s my definition, not the dictionary’s. I use that definition because for many of us, it’s just not possible to be physically alone or far from the madding crowd on a regular basis. Being by yourself is optimal for solitude, and we do need to carve out time to just be alone, but just being alone doesn’t necessarily mean you’ll get any mental stillness. Fortunately, you can train yourself to get still in your mind and find peace no matter what’s happening around you. You can get the benefits of solitude, even if you can’t physically remove yourself from the chaos.

Thomas Merton was a monk who offered some serious encouragement for those of us who don’t have the option of hiding in a cave or a cottage in the mountains. He said, “As soon as a man is fully disposed to be alone with God, he is alone with God no matter where he may be—in the country, the monastery, the woods, or the city.” Mental stillness can happen anywhere. But it takes some practice. It’s exercise and training for your spirit.

In Isaiah 30:15, God tells Israel, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength....” (NIV) This statement seems really counterintuitive. In physical exercise, the harder you push and stretch your muscles, the stronger you get. No pain, no gain. But God says that spiritual strength comes from the total opposite action. It comes from quietness and trust. “Be still and know that I am God.”

Stillness is strength.

# Day 24: Strength Through Solitude

But in this world driven by fear and anger, with everyone trying to get their needs met and achieve their hopes and dreams, stillness and quietness won't just happen. You'll have to create space for solitude. The good news is that you have time for solitude. But there's a good chance the noise of the urgent has convinced you that you don't.

## **TODAY'S PRAYER**

Heavenly Father,

I know I need to find time to just be still before you so I can listen to your voice. I need to stop spinning, stop fixing, and start trusting. Help me to make stillness a priority in my life.

Amen

# Day 25: Seeing You for Who You Really Are

## VERSE:

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” —Romans 8:28, ESV

**A right interpretation of the world starts with seeing yourself correctly.** You need to see yourself the way God sees you.

Sure, you’ve made some mistakes. You’re probably even doing some self-destructive stuff right now and want to stop. But shame keeps telling you that you aren’t worth being loved. You have to understand that no matter what you’ve done or continue to do, you are still valuable.

A crumpled and bent one-hundred-dollar bill hasn’t lost a cent of value. And neither have you. You aren’t shattered. But the frame you’ve been seeing yourself through might be. Truth can fix that.

This is why what Jesus taught is so powerful. When you accept His gift of salvation, you get reframed. He sees you for who you really are. Paul described the transformation this way: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Your value comes from Christ in you. There’s an amazing promise that comes with that new identity: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

God says it’s all gonna work out for good; you just need to adopt His way of seeing things. When you start to get His perspective on your life, you’ll be able to release fear and anger. You’ll be free to love and be loved. You’ll also start to realize that there is a thread of purpose running through the good, bad, and ugly of your story.

# Day 25: Seeing You for Who You Really Are

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I need your help to reframe how I see things in my life, and how I see myself. I keep trying to hold on to the bad things—the guilt, the shame, the sadness, the defeat. Help me to Daily surrender these things to you and view life through a heavenly perspective.

Amen

# Day 26: Responsibility and Anger

## VERSE:

“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.” —2 Peter 1:10, ESV

**When we’re responsible for something and don’t step up, it leads to frustration and anger in us and those around us.**

I know lots of parents who are angry and resentful at their young children for how they’re behaving. In many of those cases, those angry parents have abdicated their responsibility to slow down and take the time to lovingly discipline their kids. One parent told me, “I’m afraid if I’m too hard on them, they won’t love me or they’ll rebel.” The sad truth is that when we don’t take responsibility, someone else will. Someone will influence and raise our kids—culture, TV, the law—and it probably won’t be the people we want taking responsibility for them, because they don’t truly love them. But you do, which is why getting responsibility right is so important.

People get angry and afraid when those who have responsibility for influence and leadership don’t do what they need to do.

David, a fearless shepherd boy, wasn’t afraid to face the giant Goliath. But the reason he had to step up was because Saul, the king and commander of the army, was afraid to attack the giant. He had the armor. He had the authority. But he didn’t take action. David killed Goliath and led the entire army to victory. He became a hero overnight, and people started singing his praises.

Enter anger.

Saul got angry with David. He set out to kill him. But all David did was step up when no one else would.

# Day 26: Responsibility and Anger

When people abdicate their responsibility, it always leads to frustration and anger. Sometimes the anger is in the person who has been living in fear and not taking responsibility for what they need to do. Sometimes the anger is from those who have to carry the responsibility that someone didn't take.

I've seen lots of leaders who are burnt out, bored, or just tired find a new project that excites them—a new business prospect, world missions. They aren't willing to step out and go full-time at the new venture because they need the stability of their income. They end up neglecting their business or churches to pursue those new opportunities. Usually, the strongest person still at the organization ends up seizing control, either in a power grab or just trying to survive. But those people who fill in the gap aren't ultimately responsible, so it creates frustration and stress within the staff. The best staff members quit. Lots of people leave angry. All because the leader isn't willing to exert the energy to be responsible for what they have been given.

This exact same phenomenon happens when tired parents turn their kids over to TV, or teachers, or other adults to raise them. The results are always negative in the long run. That's why it's so important to constantly evaluate our level of responsibility in every situation. When we properly evaluate what we are—and aren't—responsible for, it brings peace and instills confidence within us and those we love and lead.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You've given me charge over many things. Help me to be faithful in the calling and responsibilities you've granted to me at home, at work, and at church. I never want my actions—or lack of actions—to cause harm to another. Guide me, Father.

Amen

# Day 27: Stronger Than Before

## VERSE:

“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” —Colossians 3:13, NIV

### **A person with experience is never at the mercy of a person with a theory.**

When you’ve lived through a difficult situation and chosen to move forward, you know a thing or two about how to make it in hard times. If you handle the challenge correctly, you will grow and be better for it. There are some things that can only be learned through bumps and bruises. A.W. Tozer once said, “It’s doubtful whether God can use a man greatly, until He has wounded him deeply.” Pain teaches us. But too often, for obvious reasons, we want to run from pain.

Sometimes we need to just sit in the reality of the pain for a while. Rather than run from it or try to numb the pain, we need to let it do its work. Give yourself time to heal—even if it hurts a lot. Take steps to work through what actually happened. For some, this may mean (if it’s safe) facing your fear and going back to the place you’ve been avoiding—the house, the town. It may be part of the reframing we talked about earlier. Do whatever it takes to symbolically let it go.

One of the quickest ways to decide what action you need to take is to ask yourself: *How would I respond to that person if I truly had forgiven and let it go?*

Then go do that.

The feeling will follow the action. Be patient with yourself. Healing takes time. But if you choose to forgive, you will heal. You will get strong again. Probably stronger than before. You’ll be back on your feet in no time. You’ll be wiser and more open to give and receive love than before because you’ll have learned what real love is about—forgiveness.

# Day 27: Stronger Than Before

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I know that I have hurt others, and I have been hurt by others. Forgive me for the times I've caused hurt to someone else. Help me to always be sensitive to those around me so I can treat them with loving-kindness. And in the moments when I've been hurt, Father, help me not to harbor that hurt. Rather, allow me to grow from it and release it to you.

Amen



# Day 28: Perfection Versus Reality

## VERSE:

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” —1 Timothy 6:6–7, NIV

**My daughter had an emotional meltdown because she couldn't get a little toy box to close.** She came to me all angry and in tears, demanding, “Close it, Daddy! Close it!” The problem was that the box was damaged and wouldn't close completely. I just couldn't get her to understand that the box will never close perfectly.

My daughter is three.

I am in my forties.

I'm still learning the lesson I was trying to teach my daughter.

It's really easy to fall into thinking that everything in life can fit neatly together and have the perfect ending I want if I just push hard enough. All the movies we watch and sermons we hear tend to tie a nice bow on all the drama. “And they all lived happily ever after with sunshine and unicorns.” We start to believe that everything should end perfectly. We want our happily ever after, and we know what it should look like.

When I have a disagreement with my wife, I want her to come to my conclusion. I keep nagging or manipulating her until she does. But she doesn't, and resentment builds. There are people who have hurt me that I'm convinced will come around and admit their guilt one day. But they don't. I obsess over my perfect ending. I won't back down until I get it. And it makes me miserable in the meantime.

# Day 28: Perfection Versus Reality

Our world is broken. No matter how hard we push or manipulate for our happy ending, there are situations in life that will never fit together perfectly or end how we want them to end. There will be some things we never get closure on. We can't change the past. We can't change what happened. There are some things we're facing right now that we can't change. We can throw a fit, or we can accept this truth and work with what we have. When we embrace what is without stubbornly holding to an obsession with everything being like we want it to be, then we can let it go. And letting go creates space for love and peace to rule in our hearts and minds.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

It's so hard to remember that you are the author of my story. Forgive me when I try to take control and manipulate the plot to fit my purposes and my version of perfection. Help me to accept where I am in this moment. And help me to see what you want to teach me ... right here, right now.

Amen

# Day 29: The Value of Scripture

## VERSE:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” —James 1:5, NIV

**There’s a reason Christians are so obsessed with the Bible.** We’re convinced it is actually God’s revelation of what is real and what works. The Bible tells tales of cold reality. Murder. Jealousy. Fear. It’s real. But there’s also a thread of hope that weaves the whole story together. That hope is Jesus. The whole Bible points to Jesus and redemption. That’s our hope in this world.

We’ve already established that if you want life to go well, value what Jesus values. He’s the center of what is real. His life is *the* example—the way He responded to people, the authority He walked in. Jesus was fearless. He even showed us how to use anger properly. He is the ideal. He is the ultimate reality. When we meditate on His life and the stories leading up to His epic act of saving the world, we get a glimpse of what’s real. It shows us how we can live in touch with reality.

Fill your mind with God’s thoughts. Just read the Bible, even if you don’t understand it all. Then ask God to show you what it means. Turn it over to your spirit through contemplation. The Apostle James said, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

God can give you wisdom about His word. Once you think you’ve got clarity on a particular part of Scripture, run it past a few wise folks and make sure it’s in line with the rest of the Bible. If you can, memorize small **Verses** that you find encouraging. Write them on notecards and place them where you can easily see them. Let them remind you of truth throughout the day. Fill your mind with God’s thoughts from Scripture. And doing so will help you keep your anger, fear, anxiety and frustration in check.

# Day 29: The Value of Scripture

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I need the divine wisdom that only you can provide me to navigate through the twists and turns of life. Help me to not only spend time in your word, but also to internalize and memorize your word. I know that the more I focus on you, the less irritated I'll be by the craziness in life. Help me to keep my thoughts in the heavenlies.

Amen

# Day 30: It Begins with Being Grateful

## DAILY VERSE:

“I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” —Psalm 9:1, NIV

**We’ve talked about a lot in this book—anger, fear, values, slowing down, priorities, letting go, and seeking solitude.** Most of what we talked about just requires a new perspective. But if you’ve made it this far in the book and feel overwhelmed about where to start, then here’s my simple tip.

Be grateful.

Start with gratitude. As the medieval German theologian Meister Eckhart once said, “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, ‘Thank you,’ that would suffice.”

Slow down and make lots of space to be thankful for anything you can find.

Start naming what you’re grateful for and why. If you really want it sink in, say it out loud. You might even want to yell it. Spend the last few minutes before you go to bed writing down what went right that day. Say a prayer of thanks for all the good that happened and ask to be reminded of all the good around you. Start a journal where you keep track of all the good things God has done in your life.

Don’t just keep the gratitude to yourself. Start expressing it. We tend to thank the waiter for refilling our glass more than we thank our spouses or co-workers for the little things they do. Change that. Be over the top with your gratitude. “But that’s their job,” you say. Sure, it may be. But thank goodness they’re doing their job! We all know people who aren’t doing their jobs; at least these people are! And besides all that, you know you love it when someone acknowledges that you’re doing your job well. So express the gratitude to others that you wish they would give to you. It will start a chain reaction of gratitude. It will make everyone a little happier and a lot less angry and frustrated.

# Day 30: It Begins with Being Grateful

Start with gratitude and you'll be amazed at what starts to change in your life.

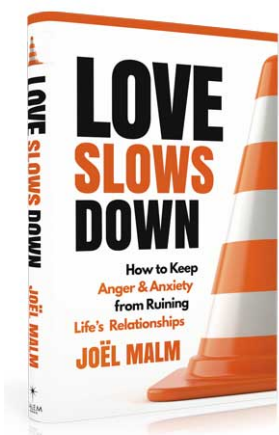
And that, my friends, is where we end this journey. Or maybe I should say, this is where we really start the journey. Living a real, full life of loving God and others starts with slowing down, consulting your anger, facing your fear, letting it go, embracing solitude, and walking with others. You don't have to be angry. You don't have to live with fear and anxiety. You don't have to be constantly running and trying harder. There's a big world full of love and joy and peace out there for you.

## TODAY'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You have given me so much in this life. Forgive me for the many times I take your blessings for granted. Father, I want to be more grateful. Let your Spirit challenge me to recognize things for which I can be thankful today—and give me the desire to stop and express my thanks for all that you do for me each day.

Amen



## **MORE ABOUT *LOVE SLOWS DOWN*: HOW TO KEEP ANGER & ANXIETY FROM RUINING LIFE'S RELATIONSHIPS**

**Anger. Anxiety. Frustration. Worry.**

We've all felt the power of these emotions and lived to regret the speed with which we responded to them.

We know we need to slow down and calm down before that torrent of emotion sweeps us away—but how?

What if you could understand those feelings better? Not ignore them or stuff them down, but actually harness their power to *improve* your relationships?

That's the journey Joël Malm will take you on in *Love Slows Down*. Whether you're feeling the constant weight of worry, flashes of fury, or the exhaustion of always being on edge, there is a way to understand what triggers your emotions and to put on the brakes. You can slow down and respond with love.

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“Joël leads us on ... the journey of learning how to overcome fear and anger and hurt so you’re free to slow down and truly live love.”

—Bob Goff, author of *New York Times* bestsellers *Love Does* and *Everybody Always*

“This book is about the greatest adventure of all: walking in God’s love that sets us free from fear and anger.”

—Mark Batterson, pastor and *New York Times* bestselling author

“In *Love Slows Down*, my friend Joël shares lots of life-changing stories and principles that can help you unleash the power of God’s love in all your most important relationships.”

—Matthew Barnett, pastor and co-founder of the Dream Center

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joël Malm, the founder of Summit Leaders, combines outdoor adventures in places like Mount Kilimanjaro, the Grand Canyon, and Machu Picchu with personal coaching to help people find and pursue their calling. He holds a master’s degree in counseling. Learn more about him at [www.joelmalm.com](http://www.joelmalm.com).