

What Makes You Angry

Matthew 5:21-22; Genesis 4:1-9; Ephesians 4:26-32

Chances are you got mad this past week.

Maybe at someone who was driving too slow in front of you when you were in a hurry.

Maybe you were mad at yourself for running a little late, and for that reason, finding yourself behind someone who was driving too slow making you even later.

Or maybe you were angry at those who made you late, and for that reason, you were now behind schedule.

There are many things, many circumstance, many people, who hold a powerful potential to ignite your anger.

Yesterday...angry because he thought

I should have stopped at the round-a-bout because he was approaching.

Funny thing...he entered the carpark through the 'no entry' side!

What is the thing that makes you angry?

What is that thing that you are still angry about?

How do we, as followers of Jesus Christ, deal with that anger?

I'm not talking about a righteous indignation...

That anger which rises up in us as a result of seeing someone or something of importance being mistreated or suffering an injustice.

Indignation anger is free from rage, resentment, and retaliation.

It's a healthy anger that is aimed at the problem and not the person.

It's an anger for the right reason and expressed in the right way.

It's a controlled anger that is meant to be corrective and constructive.

Indignation anger is the kind Jesus displayed.

Anger is a normal emotion. (26)

26 "In your anger do not sin": (NIV)

26 Be angry BUT do not sin; (RSV)

26 Be ye angry, AND sin not: (KJV)

The point is it is possible to be angry and not sin.

Anger in and of itself is not bad, God created anger for a good purpose...
with good intentions.

The gospels tell of Jesus becoming angry on several occasions, but it was always of the indignation type, aimed at correcting a wrongful practice or adjusting an unhealthy attitude.

You might remember the story of Jesus entering the temple.

When Jesus saw what the religious leaders had done to corrupt the temple, Jesus became angry.

His anger was not directed at hurting people but at the wrong things they had done in God's name.

Jesus was angry because the people had violated God and His anger was an expression of God's anger.

Jesus demonstrates that it is possible to be angry and not sin.

The question we need to ask is:

What did Jesus do that allowed Him to express His anger in healthy ways?

The answer is found in His focus. Jesus never allowed His emotions or pain to take His focus off of God and onto himself. Jesus was able to keep God as His first priority even when He was angry.

Indignation anger is the only type of anger that Scripture allows.

It is the type of anger we feel and express when we see the exploitation of children in the Bill Henson photos.

It is the type of anger we express when we hear of the Burma Juntas refusal for allow aid.

But that is not the type of anger I am talking about this morning.

I'm talking about the type of anger that has its root cause in bitterness.

The type where we harbour grudges and resentment and it spills out in words, actions and attitude.

The type of anger that hinders the gospel.

God wants us free from anger that would hinder our Christian testimony.

Think about your week, month or even years:

what were the things that made you angry?

The real question, however, is not what made you angry,

but are you still harbouring bitterness about it?

Are you replaying that video tape in your mind?

Are you mulling it over, and over, and over, thinking about what that person did to you and what you should have done back, or what you're going to do the next time.

Christina Feldman said it this way, "Can you accept the moments of anger and fear as guests, be willing to receive these emotions with kindness, but not feeling obligated to serve them a five-course meal?"

There are things that make you angry...

but do you allow those emotions to stay, take hold, so you become bitter.

Anger is one of our most powerful emotions, but it is also potential destructive. It spawns other emotions like resentment, bitterness, retaliation, and even apathy. And these are all self-destructive emotions.

There is much Scripture around that deals with the issue... We can only touch on a few, and hopefully give you some insight into dealing with anger.

Ephesians 4...very practical book. In the end of chapter 4 Paul is dealing with the things Christians must put away...

Paul warns about anger... It is OK to be angry...but don't sin in your anger. No place for Christian to live with bitterness or anger. We must be free from that emotion.

We need to see grace manifested in overcoming this issue.

Are you harbouring bitterness or anger... Against family members, friends, neighbours, church family?

It's been said that bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping your enemy dies. Or holding on to a hot, burning ember hoping your enemy gets burned.

Bitterness and anger will hinder the gospel. People will see how it affects you.

All of us get angry, none of us are immune to it... Some are better at dealing with it than others.

So what drives our anger? Jim Allen came up with an acronym that draws out 5 reasons/facets of why we get angry...

A-Assumptions.

We get angry because we assume one thing about a person or situation, and then are presented with facts that differ from that assumption.

Assuming causes all kinds of grief.

We assume that our wife/husband is going to cook dinner, fix the car, pick up the kids, or some other chore, only to get angry when our partner DOESN'T do that.

Expectations not met; let down by people; mistreated by leaders, other believers, family, marriage, parents.

Why did I have to grow up in this family?

Why did I have to have those parents?
Why did I have to live in this part of the city/world?

N - Negativity

This is often an extension of the assumptions we make.

Think about it?

Do you know anyone who gets angry because they assumed something POSITIVE about a situation/person?

I don't.

A large portion of our anger comes from us looking at someone from a negative perspective and assuming negative intentions.

We get upset because we think someone has let us down, they are lazy or unmotivated.

G - Greed

Ultimately, we get angry when we don't get what we want. And most of us want a lot.

Without question. Often without good reason. If we don't get it, look out, Anger, here we come!

E - Emotion

This facet, EMOTION, may seem redundant.

Anger, after all, is an emotion, right? Well, yeah...

But emotion makes emotion.

That is: as we express our anger, we tend to create anger in others.

Then we get angrier, which makes them angrier in turn. And so on.

R - Reaction

Finally, the fifth facet is REACTION.

Anger is always a product of our reaction to a real, or imagined (see numbers 1-3), event. Ultimately, the best way to minimize our anger is to get out of the habit of reacting to situations. Yeah, I know: "easier said than done."

Rather than REACTING to events on instinct, we can take a few extra moments to think about what's going on and choose how we wish to RESPOND;

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is very clear that anger is destructive to relationships, and further, to hold these emotions in your heart is just as bad, in God's eyes, as doing them.

Anger in and of itself is not bad, but that it holds a powerful grasp on our lives that can cause other potential problems.

Anger can lead you to sin, if you let it.

So his advice is to get rid of it.

Hand over your bitterness and anger to God.

Look at Cain and Abel.

In a nutshell, what was Cain's real problem?

God showed favoritism toward his brother Abel and Abel's offering.

Why?

Some commentators from the text say that Cain brought some of what was left over. He had a good harvest, more than he needed, and so he brought what was left over as his offering.

He brought what was available.

Abel, on the other hand, brought the first fruits, the first born, the "fat portions" meaning the best parts, the finest offerings.

I think this passage clearly shows it is not what you bring to God as an offering, but your attitude makes a HUGE difference.

Cain was stingy, greedy, and the fact that God preferred his brother's offering made him angry.

And in rejection of Paul's advice to the Ephesians, his anger led him in to sin.

He needed to look inside his own heart.

Dealing with anger is complex and challenging.

Complex because anger surfaces in the strangest places, for the strangest reasons, in the strangest ways.

Challenging because if not handled properly can be dangerous and destructive.

It hurts us and others physically, emotionally, relationally and spiritually.

How do you respond to it?

When you are sick or have a virus the first thing you do is try to get rid of it.

You might drink lots of fluids, get plenty of rest or take medications that will combat the effects.

Paul is saying when you harbor anger inside do everything you can to get rid of it.

Like a virus it wants to gain supremacy over your life but you need to do all you can to replace your anger with something more powerful.

So what do we do with anger, rage, bitterness, malice etc?

Hand over your bitterness and anger to God.

Replace anger and bitterness with Christ-like qualities

Events will gnaw at us, eat away at us.
“Loose your temper and you loose your testimony.”
Relationships are damaged through anger.

God says, ‘Put away ALL bitterness, rage etc.’
Includes slander and malice...speaking, not to people, but about people.
This affects the atmosphere of home, work, church, society, world.

Hurting people want to hurt people.

How do we do away with bitterness and anger.
It is not just a moral decision, not a thing of just the will...
It is a spiritual thing too.

Look at verse 20 of Ephesians 4...
God in his miraculous grace has saved you, changed you.
V24 you are a new creation.
Changing the way you think and live.
Changing who you are on the inside.
As members of the new community it is our response and responsibility to not be angry.

Now that is not easy...but we have an incredible basis for it...
The forgiveness you have received in Christ.

If God has forgiven your countless sins...
You need to forgive the sins you are counting against others.

If someone has done something against you...
Can that possibly be worse than what you have done against God?

In his mercy God sent Jesus Christ...he died in your place!
God has forgiven me...so I can forgive too.
You know, that keeps me humble.

Forgiveness releases the person who has hurt you and gives the pain to God.
Forgiving is not forgetting...
But a letting go of the pain caused by another person or event.

It means actually putting it away.
Sometimes you hear people say, ‘I have forgiven them, but I never want anything to do with them again.’

But God says you need to do more...
This is hard...God says, ‘Be kind and compassionate’
He is not talking about that in a general sense...

but specifically directed at those whom you forgive.

To forgive might clear our conscience...

but being kind, being a blessing to those we think have wronged us...

That is hard, but that is what God calls us to do.

Guess what...there may be forgiveness you need to seek from someone.

Maybe out of pride we might not be willing to admit we are wrong...

But there is always two sides to any dispute, so we need to ask ourselves...

What have you done to damage relationships.

What bitterness and anger have you caused.

Where do you need to ask for forgiveness.

How can you learn to replace anger with forgiveness?

Believe that anger is a rational choice!

If you don't nurse a grudge it dies.

People can provoke you to become angry but only you can stay angry.

Anger in the end is a choice you have made.

Look to the Holy Spirit to empower you.

Confess to God that you have not expressed your anger in healthy ways.

List the different events where you allowed the situation to be out of control
and ask God to forgive you.

When you have agreed with God about where you need to change the Holy Spirit will
become a strong force in your life for change.

Remember, Jesus forgave you!

With Christ there is anger release—as we receive His life-giving love—and then in
turn, allow Him to live that love through us.

Maybe you're here today, and no matter how hard you've tried, that release does not
seem to come.

Maybe you've tried and tried, and it just seems to continue in a spiral.

Maybe you're here today, and things have been going pretty well, but there is just
that one little something that keeps nagging at you in the back of your mind, and you
recognize that little tempting voice calling you to harbor that grudge a little longer.

Won't you come and be free from it instead, before it grows to an even greater
strength?