**Dealing with Sinful Anger, God’s Way!**

*(material adapted from Randy Patton: “A Biblical View of Anger”)*

As Christians, we are called by God to think differently about life than how the world thinks. One area in which this is essential is the topic of anger. The world says that anger needs to be managed – thus you hear people speak of “anger management.” The Bible says something entirely different. God says our sinful anger needs to be identified, confessed, repented of and replaced! We need to embrace God’s perspective on anger.

In this session we will learn from God’s word, what a Biblical view of anger is, and, how to deal with sinful anger God’s way. As we begin this study, let’s commit ourselves to being the kind of people who seek to honour God and bless others.

**I. A Biblical View of Anger**

**A.** God and Anger

1. Even a **loving** God gets angry. (Psalm 7:11; Romans 1:18; John 3:36)

2. God’s anger is always a **righteous** response to what is wrong and offensive; it is never sinful. (Psalm 5:5b)

3. Jesus was **filled** with anger when He encountered people who perverted the worship of God. (Mark 3:4-5; 10:14; Matt. 23:2-36; John 2:14-17)

4. Therefore, God **affirms** that anger can be utterly right, good, appropriate, and the loving response to sin.

5. God’s anger is frequently expressed as redemptive **love**. The gospel is presented in terms of how love and righteous anger come to be resolved:

a. In God’s love, His just anger against our sin fell on Jesus (1 John 4:10)

b. In God’s love, He eventually turns man’s sinful anger into good (Romans 8:28-29; Acts 2:22-23)

**B.** What is Anger?

1. Definition: anger is a strong **feeling** of displeasure or hostility caused by a real or perceived offense or injury to one’s self, or an unmet desire, usually accompanied by a desire to retaliate or seek revenge.

2. The New Testament has three different words for anger:

a. *Thumos* – explosive anger; the boiling agitation of the feelings and passion of anger (Ephesians 4:31 “wrath”)

b. *Orge* – an abiding, settled attitude of indignation that frequently seeks revenge (Ephesians 4:31 “anger”).

c. *Parorgismos* – anger mingled with irritability, exasperation, and or bitterness (Eph. 4:26; Romans 10:19; Eph. 6:4 “anger; provoke to anger”)

3. Therefore, anger is not a **thing** (it’s not something or some substance inside of you). All parts of our nature are involved (emotions, will, actions, etc.)

For example, it is not Biblical to say, “My anger got the best of me!”

4. Anger has an **object** – a target (human or non-human … punch a wall, etc.)

5. Anger is often a means of coercing, manipulating, and intimidating – often anger is a **weapon** used to get what you want or to punish people when you don’t get what you want!

**C.** Where Does Anger Come From?

1. Anger is **natural**. We were created in the image of God; God has the capacity to be angry, (but always in a righteous way), and so we have a capacity for anger.

2. However, our **sinful** nature has the capacity to be angry in a sinful way (no one has to teach a child how to throw a temper tantrum).

3. Anger comes from our **hearts**! (Mark 7:20-23)

4. Expressions of Anger can be **learned**. Anger is taught and modeled to us – from parents, siblings, spouses and many others. We learn what to get upset about and how to show our displeasure. (Prov. 22:24-25).

5. Anger is **practiced** and can become a habit. (Prov. 19:19)

6. Anger is a **moral** matter – anger judges things. It weighs something and finds it wrong, lacking, or displeasing. Then it moves into action.

7. Anger itself is **judged** by God! God judges our judging, thinking and perceptions. Do we weigh things properly, perceive evil in godly ways and respond Biblically? (Hebrews 4:12-13; Romans 14:4; 10-13 in principle)

8. Most people think their anger is a normal and **justifiable** response to the way they perceive they have been treated. Sometimes anger is justified by calling it another name: disturbed; frustrated; disappointed; ticked off; got up on the wrong side of the bed.

9. Most often our anger is sinful anger. It is selfishly motivated, murderous by nature (Mt. 5:21-22), destructive, contagious and leads to other sins (Prov. 15:1, 18; 29:22)

**II. How to Deal with Sinful Anger, God’s Way**

**A**. Rightly Identify Sinful Anger

1. Recognize that **most** (if not all) of your anger is sinful.

2. Recognize the Bible consistently **warns against** being angry! (Psalm 37:8; James 1:19; Eph. 4:31 Ro. 12:19)

3. Recognize that sinful anger is **fueled** by idolatrous lusts.

a. Not getting your own way or what you want (James 4:1-3)

b. Wanting good things too much so that they become idols in your heart. You sin to get something you want, or you sin because you can’t get what you want (even good things).

4. Questions to ask yourself and others:

a. Do I get angry about the **right things** – sin? If not, why not? (consider James 4:1-3 again)

b. Do I express my anger in the **right way** – in a way that is pleasing to God and helpful to others? If not, why not? (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 4:1-3)

c. How long does my anger last? (Eph. 4:26-27)

d. Is my anger controlled? (Galatians 5:22-23)

e. What is the effect of my anger? Is it honoring Jesus Christ? Is it ruining my testimony for Christ? What affect is it having on my relationships with family and others? (Matt. 5:16; James 1:20; Proverbs 18:21)

**B.** Confess Your Sinful Anger to God and Others (Psalm 32:5; Matt. 5:23-24)

1. To confess means, “to say the same thing that God says” – that your anger is sinful. It does not simply mean saying, “I’m sorry.” (2 Corinthians 7:10)

2. Acknowledge to God and others your evil motives, attitudes and actions (James 4:1-3). Be specific!

3. Ask God and the person(s) for **forgiveness** for your sin: “I sinned against you when I … I should have … Will you please forgive me for …?” Be specific!

4. **Receive** the forgiveness of God (1 John 1:9) and others when extended to you (Mt. 5:24) and act forgiven (no pouting or pity parties).

**C**. Repent of All Sinful Anger

1. To repent means to have a change of **mind** that leads to a change of **actions**: stopping sinful anger responses and starting godly responses. The fruit of true repentance is a changed life. (2 Cor. 7:10ff)

2. The Bible commands a **different** response to what most people thing is a normal and justifiable occasion for anger. (Matt. 5:44; 2239; Romans 12:18; Ephesians 5:25

3. The gospel is necessary for those who are not in Christ (Eph. 2:8-10).

**D**. Put Off and Put On!

1. Develop a specific **plan** to replace sinful anger with godly motives, thoughts, words, actions and emotions (Eph. 4:22-24; Gal. 5:22-25; Phil. 4:8-9).

2. Realize that this will not eliminate problems, injustices, difficult people, or the feelings of anger, etc. However, as you practice godly responses to situations and circumstances where you are tempted to respond with sinful anger, the Holy Spirit will help you to faithfully begin to respond in ways that are pleasing to God and a blessing to others.

**E**. Some Final Thoughts

1. See **God** in the midst of life’s trials (Gen. 50:20; Romans 8:28-29; James 1:1-2)

2. Make room for the **work** of God. Do not play God. (Gen. 50:19; Romans 12:19)

3. Return **good** for evil. (Romans 12:21)

4. Determine to solve **your part** of the problem (Ro. 12:18).

5. Pray, without ceasing, for God’s help!

Resources:

Lou Priolo: *The Heart of Anger* (Amityville: Calvary Press, 1997)

Ken Sande: *The Peacemaker* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997)