



Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

The Sermon on the Mount - Part 1 • Anger • Matthew 5:21-25 • 07/08/2018

Main Point

When we allow anger to creep into our lives and control us, we miss out on the life Christ died to give us.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing people do that really pushes your button?

Everyone gets angry from time to time. When you do, are you more likely to act out in your anger, or sit on it and stew?

Certain things in life trigger angry reactions in us, whether we like it or not. Maybe you have a case of road rage, or maybe you get angry when people talk in movies, or maybe it's something more serious. Regardless of the circumstances, there is no excuse for our anger. The Bible clearly states that it is a sin unless it is the righteous anger that seeks to uphold God's glory (like Jesus displayed in the temple). People tend to respond to anger in one of two ways—they frequently vent it or they hold it in until it boils over. Regardless of which camp you fall into, anger is a very real issue we all deal with. Thankfully God's Word provides guidance for believers to deal with their anger in a God-honoring way.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Matthew 5:21-25.

What Old Testament passages is Jesus teaching from? How would teaching from these passages get His audience's attention? How does it grab our attention today?

How did Jesus interpret the commandment not to commit murder? How is this different from the way many in Jesus' day and ours interpret the same commandment?

When Jesus discussed anger in His most famous sermon, His lead-in text was from the Ten Commandments. His audience then and many today know about this famous portion of Scripture. But He gave an interpretation that thwarted His hearers' expectations. As the Ten Commandments make abundantly clear, murder is a sin, but the attitude of the heart that leads to murder—anger—is also sinful. The person who has anger toward their brother is as guilty as a murderer!

Do you think most people take anger as seriously as Jesus did? Why or why not?

What does anger do to our relationship with those we are angry with? What does it do to our relationship with God?

The command to not murder is not just a way to stop murder, but a tool for revealing that the heart of an angry person is the same as one who murders. To be angry is to essentially desire the end of that person's existence in that moment, and is a clear offense against God because all people were created in the image of God. Anger not only hurts our relationship with that person, but with God as well. Jesus thought that this was so important that He taught a person who is angry with someone should seek reconciliation before making an offering. Jesus taught that this should be done "quickly" (v. 25).

What is the relationship between anger toward others and your worship of God?

Why do you think Jesus teaches that relational reconciliation is necessary for authentic worship?

Was Jesus ever angry? What does this teach us about anger?

What is the difference between constructive anger and destructive anger?

Anger is not inherently wrong. Jesus cursed a fig tree when it did not produce fruit and turned over tables in the temple when people were using God's house for their gain. When you make a mistake, it isn't wrong to grieve or be angry, it is what we do with that anger—the expression of it—that makes it useful or damaging. We need to know the difference between constructive and destructive anger. If we let our anger grow out of control, we give the Devil a foothold in our lives.

| Have a Volunteer read James 1:19-20.

What does it mean to be quick to listen and slow to anger? Do you struggle with this?

What are some things we can do to become better listeners? What hedges can we set up to become slow to anger?

How does embracing forgiveness and restraining our anger lead to righteous living? How does this model Jesus to others?

Read James 1:25. What is the result of those who seek to do the law of the Lord?

James said to be slow to anger, because it is often quick-tempered, and that unrestrained anger leads us to sin. This type of anger does not lead us to the righteousness of God, but away from it. The point that James is making is that human anger, though sometimes justified, cannot ultimately change a person. It is the saving work of Jesus that ultimately frees a person from the anger that controls him.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How do anger and other sins keep us from living the abundant life available to us in Christ?

Are there any brothers or sisters with whom you are angry and need to seek reconciliation?

What steps do you need to take?

Are there any areas in which you are giving the Devil a foothold in your life? What could you do to prevent this from happening?

How can Jesus' teachings on righteousness, anger, and lust help you share the gospel this week? Does someone specifically come to mind with whom you can share the gospel?

Pray

Close your time in prayer by asking God to help your group to deal with the anger in their lives. Pray for a humble spirit toward anger that looks to get rid of it immediately. Thank God for His forgiveness, and ask Him to help you to show forgiveness and grace instead of anger.

Commentary

| Matthew 5:21-25

5:23-24. Disciples must attempt at their earliest opportunity to reconcile with a brother or sister who has something against them, even if doing so interrupts important business. Speaking to the context of His day, Jesus said disciples should seek reconciliation even if it meant halting in the middle of offering sacrifices at the Jerusalem temple. This interruption was significant since Jesus' original audience (located away from Jerusalem) would have to abandon their gift at the altar, travel for days to reach Galilee and seek reconciliation, and then return to Judea to complete the sacrifice. Such is the priority of reconciliation.

5:25-26. A person can typically pay a smaller penalty for their offense by seeking an out-of-court settlement rather than waiting for the issue to be settled in court. This illustrates that reconciliation is urgent because the longer it is postponed, the more severe the consequences.

| james 1:19-20

1:19-20. Christians can pretend to obey God without truly listening to His commands. The readers of James's letter knew the transforming power of God's Word, the gospel. James urged them to demonstrate this change, particularly in their speech. He began by courteously addressing them as "My dear brothers," and then challenged them to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. The commands probably refer both to our relationships with one another and with God. We are to be quick to hear and slow to talk both toward other people and toward God.

The command to be quick to listen calls for an eagerness to hear and obey God's message. The appeal to be slow to speak demands silence until we have understood and applied the message. It is a call for restraint lest we produce hasty, ill-timed reactions. The challenge to be slow to become angry warns against hostile, bitter feelings. We cannot hear God if we remain distracted with resentment, hatred, or vengeful attitudes.

Our society encourages us to express our feelings, whether they be good or bad, peaceful or inflammatory, godly or ungodly. James 1:19, however, pictures the wise person as one who listens to God and others, deliberates a response carefully, and answers with cautious words.

1:20. This verse supports the command to be slow to become angry. Man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. The anger prohibited by this passage is not so much a flashing, destructive temper as a simmering pot of hostile, mean-spirited feelings.