

SERIES: I'M NOT ANGRY
PART 2: YOUR ANGER IS NOT MY PROBLEM

Last week we looked at the four different ways that people choose to express their anger. Notice I said choose because the Bible says that we have a choice in how we express our anger. If you are like me at times it doesn't feel like you have a choice, it just seems to come out. But that is because most of us have not taken the time to reflect on how we learned how to manage our anger. The starting point for all anger management is our home. Those people we depended on the most for our existence are the ones we imitated when it comes to this most important topic of anger management and what are the triggers for your anger. I like this term trigger because it has to do with the cues you pick up from your environment.

I know so many people who haven't resolved past issues, so whenever they are in an environment that either causes them to remember a past hurt or painful experience it will trigger the emotions they had at that moment. Or, if have lost a loved one and it is still painful when the date of their death comes around, it can trigger feelings you had when you first experienced their loss.

So what I want to do this morning (afternoon) is for us all to learn some skills from the Bible on how to disarm the person who uses these negative anger styles with you. I want us to ask ourselves three questions and then answer them: 1) **How**

do you respond when you feel that people trigger your own anger? Do you know why our marriage partners and family members trigger our buttons the most? Because in marriage we unconsciously are drawn to those who will mirror the way we grew up feeling and acting. Just think about it in your own marriage, or if you're divorced or single you can reflect on how your most intimate relationships mirror what you grew up with. 2) **How do you deal with your own anger and not react to them in anger?** 3) **And, how do you deal with a person's anger when they will not admit that they're angry?**

I. Identify the cost of your anger

The Bible teaches us to identify and calculate what you're going to lose when you express your anger in the style you're accustomed to. You're less likely to react in anger when someone is pushing your buttons if you have taken the time to think through the negative consequences that you have experienced when you have reacted in anger.

The Bible is very clear on the consequences that we experience when we don't defuse the impact of our own anger and other's anger. Proverbs 29:22 says, **“An angry person starts fights (causes troubles); a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin.”** One of the costs we must identify is that when we vent our anger, in the different ways we have discussed, you start fights. You create strife and bitter conflict. Your anger causes discord, dissension and disagreement. God says unmanaged anger causes you to

commit many different sins including chaos in relationships, cursing, insulting others, misusing God's name, being rude, lacking kindness, being cruel, oppressive and being proud. These are the results that you get when you function in any four of the different types of anger expression from last week.

The Machine Gun type. The Mute type. The Martyr type and the Manipulator type. James 3:16 says it best: **“For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.”** Proverbs 15:18, **“A hot tempered person starts fight (arguments).”**

Proverbs 14:17 GN, **“People with hot tempers do foolish things.”** Proverbs 14:29 LB, **“Anger causes mistakes.”** Here are the costs to my angry expressions. I will cause trouble and stir it up. I will sin. I will cause arguments. I will make mistakes. I will do foolish things. To identify the costs to my anger means that I will want to think twice before reacting when I can feel my buttons are being pushed. You always lose when you lose your temper. You lose respect. You can lose the love of your family and friends. You can lose your jobs. You can lose your health by anger mismanagement.

You can motivate people with anger in the short run, but you will lose in the long run. How many kids have been alienated from their dads or moms because of anger out of control? How many people have been cut off from a boyfriend, a girlfriend, husband, a wife or a friend because someone lost their cool? **Anger in all its forms destroys relationships faster than anything else.** When you feel your buttons being pushed by someone's angry response to you, you are never wiser then when you identify the cost and you allow that recognition to cause you to restrain yourself.

II. Look past their words to their pain

It is important that you develop the ability to look past a person's words to their pain. Instead of responding to what they're saying, look at why and the cause of what they're saying. Please read out loud with me Proverbs 19:11, **“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”** Hurt people hurt people. Abused people abuse people.

Here is the decision you have to face. Am I going to overcome evil with good, or am I just going to relate on their level? When you attack someone you are no better than they are. When you get even with someone it puts you at the same level. When you respond with love and kindness it puts you in the same place that Jesus is. When you respond in love you look past their words to their pain. Edwin Markum wrote a very short poem, and it's famous. **“They drew a circle to shut me out, heretic, a rebel, and a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win. We drew a circle that took them in.”** I want to encourage us all here at CVCHURCH to take the same attitude that Jesus did. I don't want to allow anyone to have the satisfaction of making me their enemy. They may hate me, but I will never hate them. Why? Because I will not be even with them and I am not going to be on their level. I'm going to be better than that. I want to be just like Jesus. I want to look past their words and look at their pain.

The myth that modern psychology has perpetuated is that if you will express your anger it will be cathartic and it will dissipate. But study after study has shown that aggression only creates more aggression. Anger only creates more anger. Angry outbursts lead to you becoming angrier more often and it becomes a habitual pattern in your life. Proverbs 15:1 teaches us, “**A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.**” God’s wisdom teaches us to look past a person’s words to their pain.

III. Think before you react

When someone starts to push your buttons consciously or unconsciously, the goal is to irritate you. They may do it visibly or in a stealth manner. They may do it in a manipulative way. The third skill the Bible teaches us is to develop the habit to think before you react. You think before you speak. Why? Because anger control is largely a matter of mouth control. You learn to stop reacting impulsively. You put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in gear. This also goes for your facial expressions. Some of us might not vocalize what we’re thinking, but we give very strong demonstrative body language with our faces, eyes and our bodies. Part of the thinking skill is you make it a priority to manage your body language as well as what you say. Please read out loud with me Proverbs 13:16, “**Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.**” At its core anger management is about developing your own character. Self-control, self-discipline, self-restraint, gentleness, humility, patience, and learning to yield

to others is all about spiritual and character maturity. See James 5:3-5; James 1:2-8 and James 3:13-18.

Proverbs 29:11 says, “**Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.**” I am being foolish when I vent my anger. James 3:16 says fools are functioning under jealousy and selfishness, and there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. Disunity, disharmony, anger, bitterness, and frustration are evil because they create hurt and ill will. God’s plan for us is that we walk in peace, love and harmony with each other. This will only take place as each one of us identify the cost of our anger. Look past a person’s words to their pain and think before you react.

What are we to do as we quietly hold back our anger? You ask yourself these three questions. Please know that all that I am teaching you takes practice, practice, practice. These are not magic bullets, because these five skills and all they contain will stretch and grow your character capacity.

A. What am I responding to in anger?

You think before reacting. This is what sensible and wise people do. You take responsibility for reacting and ask yourself, What is the reason I am angry?

B. Where am I feeling threatened?

Anger can be called your emotion of self-preservation.

Anger, according to Dr. Carter, “...comes when you feel the

need to clearly communicate that your personal boundaries have been violated.” Anger can be felt even when others don’t see it. Anger is defined as intent to preserve, **1) personal worth, 2) essential needs, 3) basic convictions.**

C. What is it that I really want, and how can I get it?

Once you can figure out if you’re feeling threatened at your personal worth, or essential needs or basic convictions then you can figure out what it is you want and how you can go about getting it. If you will reflect before reacting, if you think before speaking, you can identify the root cause of your anger, then takes steps to deal with those issues in a healthy way. Proverbs 17:27 says, **“A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered.”**

IV. Ask God for help

Please read with me Psalm 141:3, **“Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips.”** This is a great verse to memorize and put it in your mind for daily use. Let’s say it one more time. “Take control of what I say, O Lord, and guard my lips.” Your life is like a tube of toothpaste. If I squeeze this tube, what’s going to come out? Toothpaste. When you squeeze your life, your heart and soul, you know what comes out? Whatever’s inside. So whatever is coming out of my life under pressure, tension, stress, and hurt—especially when dealing with angry people—I must realize that the circumstances and the people are not the issue. The

heart of the problem is what's in my heart. It's what's coming out of me. God is simply using angry people and my stressful situations to allow me to see what is in me. It is often times when we're already under a lot of pressure and stress we over act with the people and circumstances in our lives, and we manifest anger in all the different ways we discussed last week. Pressure always reveals what's inside of you. None of us like to admit that. But it's the truth. We hear the things coming out of our mouths or the actions from our lives, and we often times say, "I don't know where that came from." The truth is it came from inside of me. It comes from your heart. So the key is to ask God to help us change our hearts. The key is to change what's inside.

If you have confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, His Holy Spirit lives on the inside of you. As you surrender to the Holy Spirit's rule and reign in your life these are the kinds of fruit and behavior that will come out of your life. Galatians 5:22, "**But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**" That's the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. I have found that when I am filled with myself, almost anything can upset me. But when I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, He uses the stress in my life to make grow His fruit in these stress filled situations.

The most important key to dealing with anger—first in your own life, and with those who push your buttons and try to make you angry—is this last point.

V. I must base my identity on Jesus

The key to anger management begins on who or what I am building my identity. The only sure and eternal foundation for my identity is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who loves me and you unconditionally, that I am His, that I am valuable, I'm worthwhile, and that He has a purpose and plan for my life. If you try to build your life on any other foundation you'll struggle with insecurity your whole life. If you build your identity on anything that can be taken away from you, you're going to be insecure and fearful, and insecurity and fear are at the root of your anger. The more secure you are the less people can trigger your anger. Read with me Proverbs 29:25, "**Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.**" If you are worried about what other people think, you will be emotionally unstable. If you're worried and fearful about who accepts and who rejects you or who approves or disapproves of you, you will be indecisive and unsure of who you are.

The only cure for how I respond to anger is, first, I must have a heart transplant. This is called Salvation. You confess that you have lived your life for yourself, which is the wrong foundation. You turn from your sin, and you turn your life over to Jesus. Acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God and He died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins, and that you are now going to live your life for Him and fulfill His purpose and plan for your life. Do you know what is the most practical, simple, logical way to start your new identity? By being baptized. If you were baptized as an infant or child, I

am not talking about that. We dedicate babies and children until they come of the age they know what Jesus did for them on the cross. Jesus was dedicated in the temple as a baby. But at thirty years of age, as an adult, He made his adult identification with God and His people. He went to the Jordan River and was immersed under water by John the Baptist. He modeled what He wants us to do. Your water baptism is all about your full identification with Jesus Christ as your God, Lord and Savior. Baptism says, “I am identifying my life with Jesus Christ. He is my life, and, through baptism, I am confessing my salvation.” Romans 6:4 says, **“For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.”** Colossians 2:12, **“For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with Him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.”** Galatians 3:27, **“And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.”**

The three things that cause anger Jesus can heal—**hurt, frustration and fear**. Jesus can heal your hurting heart with His love. Jesus can replace your frustrated heart with His peace. Jesus can replace your insecure heart with His power.

Let’s Pray. “Father, it’s sad but true, but we often get angry with the people we love the most, those we’re closest to. Because we forget that You’re the source of all that we need, not others, we get angry. Jesus, help us to remember that

when we expect anyone else to meet needs that only You can meet, we're going to be disappointed. We're going to be let down. We're going to be angry. Father, I'm certain there are people here today who are struggling with anger, in one of these four forms we have talked about over the last two weeks. They're angry because of hurt or because of frustration or because of insecurity. And You, Jesus, that You are the answer to all three of those things. Help them to experience hope and healing today."

Will you pray this prayer with me. "Dear God, I admit I have a problem with my anger, and I let other people push my buttons, and I get even, and I retaliate, and I fight back, and I don't think before speaking. I'm asking for Your help. Help me to reflect before reacting. Help me to learn to release my anger appropriately. Help me to find my identity completely in You." If you've never been baptized say, "Jesus I want to be baptized to identify myself as You commanded us to do. I open myself completely to You. Come into my life. Save me, change me. Make the changes in me only You can make. It is in Your precious, loving, forgiving, healing name I pray."