

SERIES: I'M NOT ANGRY
PART 7: MY ANGER IS BETTER THAN YOURS

I want to start with a story that I have modified from Drs. Carter and Minirth's incredible book which I highly recommend to each of you, **THE ANGER WORKBOOK: A 13-Step Interactive Plan to Help You Understand and Deal with Your Anger.** I will refer to this book several times this morning (afternoon).

Dinnertime was long gone when Jim walked through his back door. His wife Tanya shouted from the den, "I'm in here sweetheart. Come on back!" As he entered the room Tanya could notice that Jim was in a bad mood. He looked exhausted. "I'll bet you're famished. You look like you would like something to eat. I will heat up some dinner for you and it will be ready in 15 minutes." Jim exploded, "You knew when I would be home! Why couldn't you have something ready for me now? Don't you ever think about anyone besides yourself?" he screamed. "I'm sorry, honey, I just didn't want to get something prepared and then you come home and it's cold. I want it to be hot just the way you like it."

As he stomped out of the room on his way to his bedroom, Jim stopped by his daughters' room where his two grade-school age girls were arguing with each other. Agitated he yelled at them, "What's the deal with you two? Can't you get along for just one day? If you don't cut this bickering right

now, you'll be sorry. I don't need any of this!" Jim came back to the kitchen and sat with his wife and daughters in stony silence. For the rest of the evening Tanya and his daughters simply stayed out of his way. They know from experience if anything or anyone did anything that could trigger him, he would fly into an ugly rage.

Jim and Tanya chose to go to a counselor. Tanya said, "I'm so tired of living in such a volatile home. Jim's anger is beyond description. I'm constantly walking on pins and needles. Something has to change, or I will leave this marriage."

"I am over your constant threats of you leaving. I don't even respond to them anymore. I live an incredibly stressful lie, and I have the need to blow off steam. You need to stop feeling sorry for yourself." Tanya turns to the counselor and says, "Jim's anger is so overpowering, it's sapping all of my strength."

Jim admits that he has a problem, so he had a few sessions with the counselor. He confessed he wanted help on understanding what drove his raging behavior. In the first few sessions, Jim discovered that his anger was a cover for insecurity. His father was very harsh with him, and he didn't experience affirmation from his friends. From early on, he simply dismissed his need for encouragement and affirmation, and, during his sessions, he finally admitted he really did feel a craving to be loved. Also, Jim got in touch with the fact that, being so over-controlled by his father, he

had determined that no one would ever do that to him again. He was making progress, when one night he lashed out again at his wife and girls. The counselor rightly said that standing up for your self-respect can be legitimate, “but something in your personality must be exposed, Jim. You seem consumed with yourself. A high percentage of your rages occur when you aren’t receiving what you want.” You see, church, his anger—like much of our anger—was motivated by pride, which is the emotion of self-absorption. I want to look at with you for the remainder of our time, **How to overcome pride’s impact on how we experience anger.**

I. Recognize pride as your spiritual antagonist

You can see how our sin nature influences each one of us from watching a newborn baby grow. They are totally self-absorbed. It can be funny at first. If a child has excellent parenting, the parents will help encourage, shape and train them that life is not all about them. Unfortunately, for many of us, we didn’t have parents who knew how to do that in a way that does not damage our personalities.

A. Pride is an obsessive pre-occupation with self

The late Dr. John Stott, one of the influential Christians in the 20th century states, “**Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.**” C.S. Lewis, another contender for having the greatest impact for Jesus in the 20th century, said, “**The great sin is pride. The essential vice, the upmost evil is pride. Sexual immorality, anger, greed, drunkenness**

and all that are mere flea bites in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind. It is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.”

The entrance of pride into the human family happens in Genesis chapter 3. But before that day happened we have a glimpse in Isaiah 14:13-15 and Ezekiel 28:16-17 to what started the assault of pride, rebellion and distrust of who God is. In Luke 10:17-18 says, **“When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to Him, ‘Lord, even the demons obey us when we use Your name!’¹⁸‘Yes,’ He told them, ‘I saw satan fall from heaven like lighting!’”** In Ezekiel, the prophet is speaking to the King of Tyre, and many scholars see a prophetic insight because of the heightened language that is used and, what is called a multiple horizon, that this passage defined something that happened in the historical realm, and the Holy Spirit was using this passage to speak to us about what also happened in the spiritual realm. The 72 disciples most likely would have been well-versed in this passage and would refer to this passage when Jesus says, **“I saw satan fall from heaven.”** Ezekiel 28:11-17, **“Then this further message came to me from the Lord:¹²‘Son of man, sing this funeral song for the king of Tyre. Give him this message from the Sovereign Lord: ‘You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty.¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone—red carnelian, pale-green peridot, white**

moonstone, blue-green beryl, onyx, green jasper, blue lapis lazuli, turquoise, and emerald—all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created. ¹⁴I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire. ¹⁵You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you. ¹⁶Your rich commerce led you to violence, and you sinned. So I banished you in disgrace from the mountain of God. I expelled you, O mighty guardian, from your place among the stones of fire. ¹⁷Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted by your love of splendor. So I threw you to the ground and exposed you to the curious gaze of kings.”” Then in Isaiah 14:12-21 Isaiah is addressing the nation of Babylon and its king, and, again the language is poetic and describing the height of arrogance and hubris of the king, but the language can also be seen as pointing to a spiritual being who rebelled against God. I believe this is the closest description we have in the Bible concerning the origin of satan who began as a created angel who served in the presence of God until pride was found in him, and he rebelled against God. Listen to the heightened language that I believe speaks to the historical situation of the day and could be King Nebuchadnezzar and satan. Vv. 12-14, God’s indictment against the king, and I believe about satan, was his indictment that the king and satan thought they could overthrow God their creator. This is the supernatural reason for pride. **“How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have**

been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. ¹³(ESV) You said in your heart, **I will ascend** to heaven; above the stars of God. **I will set** my throne on high; **I will sit** on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴**I will ascend** above the heights of the clouds; **I will make myself** like the Most High.” It is satan’s arrogance that causes him to become a liar because he becomes God’s chief antagonist, and, in the garden when the serpent shows up, who represents satan, you can hear and see the lies that he deceived and seduced Eve with which brought sin to the human race. In John chapter 8:31-44 Jesus refutes a group of Jews, because they were rejecting who Jesus was and were accusing Him of being a Samaritan devil possessed by a demon. They are saying this to God Himself. Here is the explanation Jesus gives to them for their inability to hear what He is saying; in vs. 44, **“For you are the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in Him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character for he is a liar and the father of lies.”** In our Ezekiel passage in 28:15 & 17 the Bible says, **“You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you.... ¹⁷Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty. Your wisdom was corrupted by your love of splendor.”** In Genesis 3, satan was able to get Eve to believe that God was jealous because she was created in His image, and he deceived her by contending that God’s reason for lying was to keep her from enjoying all the possibilities inherent it being God-like. Because he was kicked out of

heaven for his treason and rebellion, he now went after God's human family. He appealed to their vulnerability just like what happened to him to lift ourselves up and exalt ourselves beyond our place as God's creatures, which lies at the heart of pride.

B. Pride is at the core of any sinful, nonproductive emotions and behaviors

Pride is our spiritual disease. Paul argues in Romans chapter 5 that sin entered into the human family when Adam sinned against God in Genesis 3. Verse 12b says, **“Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.”** But Paul goes on to argue in that chapter though death, which is separation from God, came to Adam, God's gracious gift of salvation, forgiveness and acceptance comes through the man Jesus Christ. Vs. 17 says, **“For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and His gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.”**

What caused sin to enter into every one of our lives goes back to pride. Proverbs 11:2 says, **“Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”** When I exalt myself and push myself it leads to embarrassment and humiliation. But humility receives wisdom. Proverbs 13:10, **“Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise.”** The Bible says that at the core of our conflicts, disagreements, strife, and anger is pride. But if we seek advice from those who know

what they're talking about it demonstrates wisdom to listen and take their advice. Proverbs 16:5 says, **“The Lord detests the proud; they will surely be punished.”** Pride is when we say to ourselves, “My way is best.” It is resisting God’s leadership and believing that we are able to live without His help. Verse 18 says, **“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.”** Proud people have a tendency to have blind spots when it comes to their weaknesses and don’t always anticipate stumbling blocks. The footnote in the NLT LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE says, **“Proud people think they are above the frailties of common people. In this state of mind they are easily tripped up. Ironically, proud people seldom realize that pride is their problem, although everyone around them is well aware of it. Ask someone you trust whether self-satisfaction has blinded you to warning signs. He or she may help you avoid a fall.”**

II. Realize that humility is the spiritual antidote to pride

The Bible shows us that pride is so closely connected to our sinful spiritual state. The N.T. repeatedly urges us to deny our selfish ambition and let God be God. It is a paradox, but when we set aside our preoccupation with our own personal needs, our need for real peace is met. Peace comes from surrendering to God’s authority, not demanding our own way.

A. Choose to humble yourself before God

James 4:6b-7 says, “As the Scriptures say, ‘God opposes the proud but favors the humble.’ ⁷So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” 1 Peter 5:5b-6, “And all of you, serve each other in humility, for ‘God opposes the proud but favors the humble.’ ⁶So humble yourselves before the mighty power of God, and at the right time He will lift you up in honor. ⁷Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.” These verses lead us to Point 1):

1) Surrender your preoccupation with self for God’s purposes

I do this by making sure that my priorities demonstrate that I want His purposes and plans to be first in my life. Humble people are not weighted down with all of their worries and cares. Why? Because they have learned to give them up to Father God, because they trust in His care and love for their lives. Pride leads me to wonder how I can make people do what I want, but self-denial can cause me to ponder how to please God in all of my activities. Because God’s purposes and plans lead us to healthy interaction with Him and others, we can be confident that submission to His will does bring more successes than failures. Humility brings God’s favor in His time, because it is a lack of self-preoccupation and a willingness to acknowledge personal limits. This shows up in our lives when we recognize that everyone is not obligated to cater to our every whim—that we need to personally admit that we are limited in our abilities to force our preferences and wills on others. We are not the center of the universe.

True humility before God will cause us to focus on how we can best serve others and learn that God's plan for us is to truly make a difference. Jesus says in Mark 8:34b, **"If any of you wants to be My follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow Me."**

2) Trust God to take care of your needs

How God promises to care for your needs:

a) God cares for the humble

"Though the Lord is great, He cares for the humble, but He keeps His distance from the proud." Psalm 138:6

b) God the supports the humble

"The Lord supports the humble, but He brings the wicked down into the dust." Psalm 147:6

c) God crowns the humble with salvation

"For the Lord delights in His people; He crowns the humble with victory."

Psalm 149:4

d) God shows honor to the humble

"He mocks the mockers but is gracious to the humble."

Psalm 3:34

e) God fills the humble with fresh joy

"The humble will be filled with fresh joy from the Lord."

Isaiah 29:19

B. Commit to focus on others

1) Put other people's needs first when appropriate

The key word is appropriate. There are some spouses that feel entitled that, whenever they have a need and they let their spouse know it, that spouse is obligated to meet it. Loved ones, that just isn't biblical. There is a phrase I hear a lot of men and women say to me. When the wife is happy, everyone is happy. I hate to break this to you, but that isn't biblical either. There are some wives that choose not to be happy, and then they try to get their way all the time. That is selfish and proud. Any husband that thinks he is the king of his castle and his wife and kids are to bow to him and meet all of his needs is selfish and arrogant. The biblical idea is that everyone in the family is to have the attitude that, "I want to serve all the members of my family." Wherever you see a husband and wife and kids functioning this way you will see a very healthy and happy family, and you're setting your kids up to be that kind of future husband and wife, and they will have a better chance of attracting someone like that with the same value. Philippians 2:3-4 says, **"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too."**

2) Be considerate and thoughtful of others

Romans 15:1-3, “We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. ²We should help others do what is right and build them up in the Lord. ³For even Christ didn’t live to please Himself. As the Scriptures say, ‘The insults of those who insult You, O God, have fallen on Me.’”

(Closing comments and prayer).