

SERIES: I'M NOT ANGRY  
PART 5: FROM FEAR TO ANGER

There was once a young couple who traveled overseas and climbed a very high mountain where they came upon a very wise old man. He motioned for them to come to where he was in his cave and sit down. He said that they could ask him any questions they had about life. They asked him the meaning of life, and he told them. They asked him the formula for success and happiness, and he wrote it down for them. They asked him about all the secrets of the universe, and they were amazed how easy it was for him to answer that question. They were so excited that they had finally found someone who can answer their questions that they decided to ask him a question of a more personal nature. They truly loved each other, but there was an issue in their lives that kept creating more problems and pain than they wanted in their relationship. So they said, “Oh Great Master, we get angry way too often with each other. We hurt each other too much with our anger. What can we do?”

Suddenly the master glared at them, broke his pencil in two, cursed loudly, and stomped back into his cave. As he was walking away from these two bewildered young people he muttered over his shoulder, “If I could figure that out I wouldn't be sitting here all alone on this mountain.”

Today's topic, **From Fear to Anger**, is a very important attitude and skill to develop, because anger that is

mismanaged can wreck havoc in your spiritual, relational and emotional life single handedly.

Steve Goodier writes, **“People who are cynical or angry have been shown to be more prone to heart attacks than those with a more positive outlook.”** And former “Saturday Evening Post” editor Norman Cousins has demonstrated for years how humor, laughter and hope can aid the healing process.”

Satan, our adversary, seeks to use our anger to separate, hurt and damage our relationships. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26-27, **“And ‘don’t sin by letting anger gain control over you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup>for anger gives a mighty foothold to the devil.”**

Paul says that anger leads to bitterness, rage, harsh words, slander and all of the other types of malicious behavior that destroy relationships. James says something very similar in James 1:19-20, **“My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20 Your anger can never make things right in God’s sight.”**

The Bible says I must learn to deal with my anger successfully so that I can get the most out of the relationships that God desires for me to have. **All of life revolves around relationships.**

This morning (afternoon), I want us to look at “From Fear to Anger:” How fear impacts my anger and how I can deal with it.

Please follow along as I read Psalm 118:1-2, 4-8, **“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.... Let the congregation of Israel repeat: ‘His faithful love endures forever. Let all who fear the Lord repeat: His faithful love endures forever.’ In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and rescued me. The Lord is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Yes, the Lord is for me; He will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me. It is better to trust the Lord than to put confidence in people.”**

Would you read with me 2 Timothy 1:7, **“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline.”** The Bible says, because of God’s unfailing love and the fact that He is for me, I don’t have to be afraid. And yet, fear plagues all of our lives.

To learn HOW FEAR INFLUENCES ANGER, let’s look at:

**I. First understand how anger and fear function in your life**

**A. Anger is the emotion of self-protection**

Too often when I teach on anger, people who don't explode and vent their anger feel that they don't ever really deal with anger. But this isn't true. It is important to what function anger plays. Anger is a signal that you perceive that somehow you are feeling unsafe. Follow in your notes and fill in the blanks, please. Anger is often experienced when we feel under attack in the following three areas.

## **1) Self-worth**

If you feel that somehow a person is rejecting or invalidating you in some way, you will begin to feel angry. Please understand that most of us will not say we're angry. We will say that we're hurt, agitated, frustrated, disgruntled, mystified, amused, but underneath we're feeling angry because we are feeling that our sense of self is under attack. When a spouse doesn't feel loved, or accepted, or understood, or valued, I guarantee you that it won't take long for there to be anger in the relationship. What makes our most intimate relationships so complex at times is that we often bring past hurt and anger from our families and other relationships into the present. It doesn't take much for some people to feel old hurts and wounds because of something in the present. If you feel that who you are is being threatened, put down or not valued it can often times lead to feelings of anger.

The second area that we can experience anger is when we feel we are under attack concerning our...

## **2) Basic needs**

The animal kingdom is all about survival. Animals look for the simplest ingredients to provide life for another day. Human's basic needs are much more complex because we're created in God's image. We have spiritual, emotional, relational, intellectual, physical, sexual, and financial needs. We are responsible to make sure that we realize these different needs and take responsibility for having them met if we want to have emotional well being. When these needs are not addressed, or when they are invalidated or denied, the result is emotional turmoil. End result is that we feel hurt and angry.

As a homework assignment, I would like you to write out what you perceive to be basic needs that you have. For some people, it's social activity, time alone, assistance from a spouse or co-worker, exercise time.

Think back to a time when your needs have been improperly addressed in your life. Example, my husband doesn't share my need for regular communication about personal matters.

The angry person is hurt and frustrated over the fact that they live without having his or her basic needs acknowledged by others. Example, you have either a husband or a wife who are very quick to criticize and fret over minor matters. Even when the other spouse tries to please him or her they still remain grumpy, because they are sure that the other spouse's imperfections will strike again.

When we feel that our needs are not being met, we are vulnerable to getting angry and often times start blaming other people for our unmet needs. These are all indicators of expressing the need for self-protection.

The third area that we can often feel that we're under attack and we need to protect ourselves is in the area of our...

### **3) Essential convictions**

Anger is often experienced by people who have been trained to see life in black or white, and they hold on to their beliefs with such a rigid dogmatism that they can become easily offended and hurt when someone disagrees with how they are thinking. It is possible to hold on to good opinions so tightly that they seem to justify unloving outbursts. It is possible that being right can lead to being wrong.

Recently, a friend of mine told me that he told two friends that go to a certain church in the L.A area that he was attending a Foursquare church. I cringed when he said that, because I knew the reaction he was going to get, and he got it. They dropped the subject and began to treat him with a little more distance. Why? Because they held to certain beliefs, and if you don't line up with them they immediately cut you off. Many people get their feelings hurt and they become angry when you disagree with them. People like that make it very hard to become close to. In order to relate to them you pretty much have to keep your ideas to yourself, or

agree with them. That does not lead to trust and the ability to have healthy conflict.

You can see how anger is the emotion of self-protection. Can you think of someone that you are feeling anger with right now? See if this isn't true. Where do you feel that one of these areas, or a combination of both of them, are somehow being attacked or threatened by this individual or individuals?

**B. Fear is the emotion of insecurity that creates a sense of apprehension, hesitation and doubt**

Fear is addressed hundreds of times throughout the Bible. Why? Because it is the emotional governor that inhibits us from living a life of courageous confidence. It sets the stage for many sinful behaviors and attitudes.

Please read with me from Psalm 23:4, **“Even though I walk through the valley of greatest darkness, I will fear no evil because You are close beside me.”** David says the antidote to fear is to know that Jesus Christ promises to never leave you. When you surrender your life to Him and you develop a relationship with Him, you learn to look to Him in all of the different experiences of life.

Like anger, we have a tendency to define fear in a one-dimensional manner. It is common to see fear as outwardly weak characteristics like shyness or cowering or intimidation. For sure, these are elements of fear. But fear can also be demonstrated by unrealistic optimism, or unreal bravado,

excessive talking, workaholism, lying and procrastination, just to name a few. Fear is an inner insecurity that robs us from living with courage, confidence and faith in God.

We have laid a great foundation in learning how to deal with anger successfully. First it is important to understand how fear and anger function in your life.

## **II. Discover how fear influences anger**

We have already discovered how anger is the emotion of self-protection. Anger is a signal that you are feeling under attack or threatened somehow. Since fear is the emotion of inner insecurity – Fear creates three kinds of defensive reactions:

### **A. Denial: The refusal to accept personal problems or tensions**

We are told that denial is subconscious. In other words, avoiding issues is so central to the person's character it occurs without people doing it deliberately. Fearful people will often refuse to take responsibility for their own attitudes and actions, because somehow they feel that it will be used against them. They are so fearful that they might make a mistake or actually be wrong that they defend themselves against the pain of that possibility by denying any wrong doing. You can see how damaging denial is to relationships. Trust can not be built with someone who refuses to take responsibility when they are wrong. Someone who uses denial a lot will often time experience anger because they feel



people are always out to get them. Trust demands a level of vulnerability that says, “I know that you will not use my faults against me.”

The biblical antidote to denial is to repent and confess my sins to Jesus Christ. Proverbs 28:13 says, **“People who cover over their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy.”** 1 John 1:9, **“But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”**

## **B. Evasiveness: Being dishonest with others**

Evasiveness is different than denial from the standpoint that evasiveness is driven by a conscious element of fear.

Evasiveness is a deliberate deception of others. Evasiveness is an example of someone who covers over their sin. They do it because they are choosing to avoid the responsibility of meeting the problem head on. They assume that conflicts or confrontations will be uncomfortable.

Examples: A woman talks to her girlfriend about her depression. The friend struggles with talking about negative subjects so she changes the subject as soon as she can.

A husband knows that his wife wants to talk about a sensitive family matter with him. He dislikes conflict so much that he decides to pour himself into his work and stay away from his wife to avoid the discussion of the problem.

A worker disagrees with his employer's policy decision, so he complains to others instead of discussing it openly with his supervisor.

Evasive behavior is fueled by fear that I might say the wrong thing, or you might not like me after I tell you how I'm feeling. Drs. Les Carter and Frank Minirth, who wrote the "The Anger Workbook," which I highly recommend and I am indebted to their material for my series, write, "**Evasiveness is a mark of personal insecurity and lack of trust in others.**" You can see how fear and anger both occur in trying to protect self when feeling threatened or under attack.

### **C. Reversal: We become aggressive with others**

Reversal is the defensive reaction that tries to protect the self by keeping others on the defensive. Reversal is used because somehow the person feels that others are out to get them, so they become offensive whenever sensitive issues are mentioned.

Ex: A husband complains to his wife that she seems to be disinterested in him, and she shoots back, "If you were only more easygoing, I might be able to accommodate you."

A wife tells her husband that she felt he spoke rudely to a family member, and he shouts back, "Let's talk about the time you openly criticized me in front of everyone. That's what I call rude."

A 13 years old girl tells her mom that she is hurt because of the angry tone her mother used with her, and the mother argues back, “Well, if you show more respect next time maybe this won’t happen.”

Healthy, growing, maturing relationships must have openness, transparency and accountability. This means that our flaws and wrong actions will have to be addressed. What can often happen too frequently is that people who don’t want to be confronted will threaten others by putting them down or becoming aggressive.

Fear intensifies anger’s ability to defend ourselves. The Bible gives us...

### **III. Three actions to take to deal with fear and anger**

The Bible tells us that God has not given us a spirit or attitude of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline. How do we tap into the resources that God has given to us in Jesus Christ?

#### **A. Actively open your heart to God’s love**

Please follow along with me as I read 1 John 4:16-19, “**We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in Him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.** <sup>17</sup> **And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the Day of Judgment, but we can face Him with confidence because**

**we are like Christ here in this world. <sup>18</sup>Such love has no fear because, perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of judgment, and this shows that His love has not been perfected in us. <sup>19</sup>We love each other as a result of His loving us first.”**

The Bible says that the key to dealing with fear and anger, which are both defensive reactions, is to **ACTIVELY OPEN YOUR HEART TO GOD’S LOVE**. How do you do that?

It’s all about learning to trust God. To trust God means I must get to know His character and personality. The Bible says that God is love, and those who have a personal relationship with God grow in love. Notice what happens when you actively open your heart to God’s love. God’s love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. As you open your heart to God, make yourself vulnerable to Him. Ask Him to pour out His love in your heart. Reflect back on those times where you have felt hurt, mistreated, judged wrongly, betrayed, and misunderstood. No one understands you better and more thoroughly than Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died on the cross and spilled His blood in order to pay for your sins. He dealt a death blow to fear and anger on the cross. To actively open your heart means to trust Jesus Christ to take care of you. Identify the areas in which you’re experiencing anger— those areas where you are feeling threatened or feel that you are under attack. Remember the three categories that we have discussed: **1) Self-Worth, 2) Basic Needs, 3) Essential Convictions**. Invite God’s love

into those specific areas and ask Him to heal you and to show you how He is protecting you, and His plans for you.

One of the best ways to **ACTIVELY OPEN YOUR HEART TO GOD’S LOVE** is in our public times of worship. Some people come to our worship times, and because they fear becoming open and vulnerable to God during our worship times, they either tune out or they don’t make themselves completely available to what God wants to do in and through them. God by His Spirit wants to touch you personally, purposively and passionately. It is only His love that can ultimately heal us and make us fully alive. It is His love, knowing that He cares for us so completely that He is watching over us and actively caring for us in every area of our lives.

The second step to take that will help you deal successfully with fear and anger is to...

### **B. Believe that God is in charge of your life**

Please read with me Psalm 118:1, 5-8, let’s begin, **“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His faithful love endures forever.... In my distress I prayed to the Lord, and the Lord answered me and rescued me. The Lord is for me, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? Yes the Lord is for me; He will help me. I will look in triumph at those who hate me. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in people.”**

When you choose to believe that God is in control of your life and that you are actively seeking His guidance, purposes and plans, you can be confident that Father God will guide you through all relational and circumstantial pitfalls. When your sense of self and emotional well-being is wrapped up in what other people think of you, you will be more vulnerable to feelings of fear and anger because you will feel like you're under attack too much of the time.

To tap into God's strength requires that you focus on God rather than on people. You can choose to let your emotions be dictated by other's opinions or God's opinion. One of the best ways to develop a God-focus is to memorize and quote Scripture. Please read Psalm 56:3-4, & 11 out loud with me, **“But when I am afraid, I put my trust in You. O God, I praise Your word. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?... I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?”**

Agree with the Psalmist. I am afraid right now and I put my trust in You. I place my life in Your hands. I trust in You, so why should I be afraid? I choose trust in You over fear. I trust Your love over anger. What can another person truly do to me? I trust in You.

Actively open your heart to God's love.

Believe that God is in charge of your life.

**C. Choose to become more authentic**

Being authentic is the exact opposite of being defensive. Authenticity is living without pretense. Being authentic means that your external life is consistent with your internal life. Common sense tells us that you must use discernment and be wise when you decide to let your defenses down and allow yourself to be known by others. Jesus is the best example of authenticity there is.

**Read Romans 12:9-10, “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”**

## **COMMUNION**

**“Then He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup>For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.’ <sup>19</sup>He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.’ After supper He took another cup of wine and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant between God and His people—an agreement confirmed with My blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.’” Luke 22:17-19**