

ANGER

WHAT IT IS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

INTRO

Anger

Psalm 4:4-5

July 31, 2016

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Read Psalm 4 then read verses 4-5 again. **How does this Psalm speak to you personally?**
2. When we're angry we either become passive and "stuff" our emotions and avoid talking about the issue or we become *aggressive* and verbally attack the person we're angry with. To be in the middle (*assertive*) means having a balance of grace and truth. **Which style (passive or aggressive) do you tend toward and why do you think you've chosen that style? Are you one way with certain people and another way with others? When have you been assertive? What would it mean for you to take your next step toward living with a balance of truth and love?**
3. First step in searching our hearts: *Cool Down*. Read Proverbs 14:17a and 29:22. The first step in searching our hearts is to cool down because adrenaline and cortisol surges through out bodies urging us to fight or flee. We can't think clearly and therefore we do or say sinful things. When anger rises up in our hearts we must slow down, stop and pray to God. **Do you typically take this first step when you're angry? If not, what will help you stop and pray?**
4. Second step: Look Inside: Read James 4. The second step in searching our hearts is to ask, "What did I want that that I didn't get?" **Can you name these desires (i.e., respect, love, affirmation,...)? Do you believe God cares about your pain? He does.** But James says when we power up with anger we are coveting (lust) what we want and "kill" with our anger when we don't get it. **How might this be true of you when others don't give you what you want? How is this a form of idolatry?**
5. Third step: Yield. Read James 1:19-20. We must yield to God first, seek his wisdom as you acknowledge your pain and also face your sinful reaction to those who hurt you. Remember--God is slow to anger and rich in love/forgiveness. Receive it.
6. Now, listen to the other. **What might they have wanted (love, respect,...)? Do you care? What will help you humble yourself and truly listen to God and care about the other person?**
7. Fourth step: Rethink and Go. **As you depend on God alone for your needs/desires, what would a "right sacrifice" (love God and love the person) look like in terms of being redemptive toward the other person? Will you do it?**

SUMMARY

Psalms 4:4-5 - In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

Offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord. (*Great verses for memory/meditation)

The #1 reason relationships fail to thrive is due to unresolved conflict. The vast majority of us fear conflict so we go passive and stuff our emotions. The other common response is to become *aggressive* as we proudly power up to 'speak our mind' and dump out our anger. The response we are aiming for is to be *assertive* in our relationships. To be full of both grace and truth. To speak the truth in love. And we must be Spirit-led to achieve this balance.

Recommended resources: *The Coward's Guide to Conflict*, by Tim Ursiny
The Emotionally Destructive Relationship, by Leslie Vernick

Anger can be a healthy response. It's good to be angry over social injustice and evil. God gets angry too. Over 600 verses in the New Testament talk about God's wrath. The wrath of God does not refer to God losing His temper, but to God's determined will and response toward all that comes against His holy character. Yet in spite of His wrath, the Bible says again and again:

Psalms 145:8a - The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

When the Bible talks to us about anger, it's mostly giving us warnings and cautions about how to deal with our anger. Ecc 7:9 - Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

When we are angry, it's not a natural response for us to stop and pray. It's easy to forget about God and live like practical atheists as we nurse silent grudges or bully and manipulate our way through life.

Ephesians 4:26-27 - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

This passage is telling us to deal with our anger quickly. Don't let it fester and marinate. The more we nurture bitterness, the more we give the enemy a foothold.

4 Steps can help us as we process our anger so we can offer right sacrifices and trust in the Lord.

First Step :: Cool Down // When anger first surges through us, we are irrational and prone to react in sinful ways. We need time to cool down. (Prov 14:17a, Prov 29:22, Prov 14:17a, Prov 29:22)

Second Step :: Look Inside // Consider the questions James asks us:

- *What causes fights and quarrels among you?* (James 4:1a)

We tend to blame others for our conflicts. However, people can't make us mad, but they can hurt and betray us. If we don't face the root of our anger (hurt), it will come out in sinful ways, either now or later.

God cares, and we can pour out our hearts to Him. (Psalm 142:1-4) We don't need to sanitize our prayers. We can come honestly.

- *Don't they (the fights and quarrels) come from your desires that battle within you?* (James 4:1b)

We tend to have a cherished view of ourselves and often fear looking inside. But David wanted to know God more than he wanted to hide, and he was willing to do the reflective, heart work. (Ps 139:23-24)

James goes on to tell us what we will find in our hearts: You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. (James 4:2a)

It's easy for us to want life to be fair more than we want God. "If God was always the pure intention of our desire, we would not be so easily troubled." (Thomas A' Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*.)

Third Step :: Listen // Listen to God and listen to the other. (James 1:19-20, Eph 4:31-32). When we are angry, we want to talk (and win), or withdraw in silent punishment. It takes the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to care about the other and listen to their story. No one has ever sinned against you as much as you have sinned against God. Yet He responds with patience, kindness, grace and forgiveness.

Step Four :: Rethink and Go // What does a right sacrifice look like in this situation? How does God want me to trust Him? How should I respond - overlook the offense or speak into it with truth and love? Am I moving toward complete forgiveness? Am I getting godly support and prayer?