

Brian Chesemore
**SESSION 2 | Mercy—A Radical
New Response to Anger**

I. WHAT IS ANGER?

A. Broadly Expressed

- Two Illustrations from Nature
- Powlison's Examples
 - Gunslingers
 - Magazine Movers

B. Our Working Definition of Anger

- *“Anger is an active displeasure toward something important enough to care about.” —David Powlison*
 1. *You identify something as wrong*
 2. *You feel disapproval of it*
 3. *You take action in some way to do something about it*
- *God has anger and expresses it in perfectly righteous ways.*

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. Mark 3.1-6

- What did Jesus identify as wrong?
- Interestingly, how did they express their wrong?
- *How do we know that Jesus felt strong disapproval?*

II. WHY DO I GET SO ANGRY?

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. James 4.1-2

James distills it down to unmet desires. There is something I want and I'm not getting it.

Christ on the other hand gets angry because of injustice.

"If this world did not throb with sufferings and sins, we ourselves would not need to learn how to also feel mercy's energetic displeasure with the status quo." Pg. 72

III. HOW CAN I BE GOOD AND ANGRY?

How do we *learn to* get this right? The key change occurs when we respond to perceived or actual wrongs with a gospel-motivation.

When I choose to respond with sinful anger, I am in judicial mode and I have assigned myself the roles of prosecuting attorney, judge and jury.

The gospel calls us to repent of unrighteous anger. Our ungodly and unrighteous anger necessitated the Cross.

- The Cross reminds us that we are sinners deserving of God's righteous wrath.
- The Cross reminds us that God has NOT treated us as our sins deserve.
- The Cross reminds us that instead we have been shown mercy, forgiveness, and are the recipients of lavish goodness.

“A spiteful, quarrelsome (angry) Christian is a scandal. It is doubtful that such a one has sat at the foot of the cross!” – J. C. Ryle

- The Cross empowers us to forsake all sinful anger and to put on love:
 - Eph. 4.26-27
 - Eph. 4.31-32
 - Eph. 5.1

IV. WHO SHOULD MY ANGER LOOK LIKE?

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Psalm 4:4

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Hebrews 1:9

Just like all the attributes of God, your anger and mine can be remade into God’s image. As Spirit-filled image bearers, we now have the power to look at wrongs done to us or others through a redemptive lens.

The God who revealed Himself in Scripture is not a theological abstraction. He is an active, morally discerning person. He sees, evaluates, speaks, and takes action. Pg. 76

Be holy as I am holy - 1 Pet. 1:15-16 (Lev.11:44)

A. How do I know if I have a holy anger?

Your anger is Godlike to the degree you treasure justice and fairness and are alert to betrayal and falsehood. Your anger is devil-like to the degree you play god and are petty, merciless, whiny, argumentative, willful, and unfair. – Pg. 66

B. We aren’t easily angered.

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Ex. 34.6-7

C. We are grieved over objective wrongs that we observe.

- Ever seen a brother or sister misrepresented? Slandered? I heard a story just this week where severe actions were taken, and justified, all on the basis of slander of a good man's character. The Bible teaches that my grief is not misplaced.
- Do you grieve that hundreds of thousands in our state of KY vote to keep access to the murder of unborn babies?
- Do you grieve when you hear of missiles landing on innocent civilians in Ukraine?
- Do you feel anguish when you read about slavery or the holocaust?

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. Ps. 103:8-13

V. HOW IS MERCY THE RIGHT RESPONSE?

Good anger, that is anger motivated by the gospel, is expressed through the Constructive Displeasure of Mercy. It brings good, wise, constructive responses into bad circumstances.

“Good anger operates as one aspect of mercy. It brings good into bad situations. It stands up for the helpless and victimized. It calls out wrongdoers, but holds out promises of forgiveness, inviting wrongdoers to a new life.” Pg. 72

- Constructive –responding to a situation in a way that builds up and does not tear down. Of all the attributes of God's nature, mercy suggests the most radical/antithetical response to our bad anger.
- Displeasure– the feeling of annoyance or disapproval we experience when something happens to us or another through offense or injury. Both pleasure and indifference would be inappropriate and *not Christlike*.

- Mercy – the Christlike disposition to not treat someone the way their actions deserve.
- “God’s mercy means God’s goodness toward those in misery and distress.” (Bible Doctrine, 91)

“Mercy. Because Jesus hates suffering and loves sufferers, sufferers find help and joy. Mercy. Because Jesus hates sin and loves sinners, sinners find forgiveness and joy.” Pg. 73

A Christian stares in the face of wrongdoing, injustice, evil and does Rom. 12:17

“By definition, mercy is consistently constructive. Mercy intervenes to address and solve whatever problem is in view. It is a rich, complex way of responding to life.” – p.72

“The typical bad angers are all versions of returning evil for evil. But, where intelligent mercy flows, then mercy’s displeasure brings a powerful good. Strong mercy is the DNA of the entire Bible. Clear-minded mercy is the DNA of redemption. Jesus gathers up our angers, not to neuter our sensitivity to evil, but to redeem how we respond.” Pg. 72

VI. PATIENCE IS MERCY’S RADICAL RESPONSE

“Patience is the willingness to respond slowly to wrongs and work with them over time...Patience hurts..you bear with difficult people and events, not out of indifference, resignation, or cowardice...Patience is not passivity. It is how to be purposeful and constructive in the face of great difficulties. You are even willing to live constructively for a long time with seemingly insoluble evils. By definition, patience means that what’s wrong doesn’t change right away.” Pg. 78

Biblical examples of mercy and patience

- You groan and weep over death Jn. 11:33-35
- You wait on the Lord with hope and eager longing Rom. 8:18-19
- You step towards the sinful with the gospel Mt. 9:9-13
- You long for good to be shown to the needy Mk. 3:1-5
- You rejoice in a gospel that rescues the ungodly Rom. 5:6-10

CASE STUDY:

GOOD & ANGRY: OVERCOMING IRRITATION, OUTBURSTS, & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Taylor and Maddie have just come home from a day of shopping. Maddie saw a couch that would have been perfect for their newly redesigned living space. Taylor felt the price was too much and would be unwise to purchase something this costly at this time—something he’s told Maddie several times already. Besides, she wasn’t on board with his last purchase he had suggested—season tickets to the Reds. What was supposed to be a date turned into a battleground of different desires being communicated yet unmet.

Their conflict lingered until they arrived home. Maddie was still very upset that Taylor didn’t listen to her. After all, it’s Mother’s Day weekend. Taylor, aware that this conversation wasn’t going to end until he gave in to Maddie’s desire (again), stewed quietly in his favorite chair. Maddie began to give him all the reasons why he’s such a disappointing husband. Taylor turned the TV on at an opportune moment to let Maddie know he was finished discussing this with her. That was it. Maddie blew up and yelled at Taylor reminding him how rude and insensitive he’s been all day! How dare he turn his attention elsewhere while she was trying to speak to him. That was all Taylor could take; to avoid any more of her attitude, he left to go work in his garage.

1. Given your understanding of the Anger Spectrum from last week, what specific manifestations of anger does Taylor need to confess? How about Maddie?

2. What were each of them really wanting in this situation?

3. How would responding with Gospel-motivated mercy have influenced this situation? What would patience have looked like?

TAKE HOME QUESTIONS

Last week, we identified what anger is and why as a sinful response to wrongs we are commanded to respond differently. This week, we began identifying how God desires us to respond considering the hope of the gospel we have experienced. Using the questions below, identify anger in your life and consider the difference patience and mercy would make when you are tempted to sin.

- What are my ungodly patterns of anger?

- Think of an expression of anger in your life from this past week. What was the purpose behind your anger? What motivated you to respond the way you did?

- What different purpose could have driven a patient response?

- Why do you think patience is the first characteristic of love that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 13?

- Can you identify one example from your life of seeing the constructive displeasure of mercy on display?

- Identify one area of your life God is directing you to grow in patience (relationship with spouse, children, coworker, etc.) and seek to live out the constructive displeasure of mercy this week.

- Pray through Colossians 3:12-13
Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.