

Different On Purpose: Killing Anger Before It Kills You Matthew 5:21-26

Passage

Matthew 5:21-26 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Anger Is a Heart-Level Offense, Not Just a Behavioral Issue

Assertion

- Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment;"

Possible Objection

- Wait, how can Jesus equate anger with murder? That feels extreme. I haven't killed anyone.

Application

- At the end of each day, ask: Where did I feel anger today? What was underneath it, pride, hurt, control, insecurity?
- Biblical Grounding: Psalm 139:23-24 "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!"
- Why it matters: You can't kill what you won't confront. Anger loses power when it's exposed instead of ignored.

Unchecked Anger Devalues People Made in God's Image

Assertion

- Jesus says, "Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

Possible Objection

- Isn't that just words? People say things in the heat of the moment. It's not that serious.

Application

- When you feel irritated with someone, immediately: Speak (or think) one truth about their value. Remind yourself: "This person bears God's image"
- Biblical Grounding: James 3:9-10 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.
- Why it matters: You cannot simultaneously nurture contempt and cultivate Christlike love.

Reconciliation Is More Urgent Than Religious Activity

Assertion

- Jesus says, "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Possible Objection

- Is Jesus really saying I should stop worshiping to go deal with conflict? Isn't worship the priority?

Application

- Identify one strained relationship and take the first step.
- Biblical Grounding: Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
- Why it matters: Spiritual maturity is not measured by how much you avoid conflict, but by how faithfully you pursue peace.

Delayed Reconciliation Leads to Greater Consequences

Assertion

- Jesus says, "Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."

Possible Objection

- Why the urgency? Can't some conflicts just fade over time?

Application

- Set a personal standard: Don't let relational tension linger unnecessarily.
- Biblical Grounding: Ephesians 4:26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
- Why it matters: Time doesn't heal anger, intentional action does. Delay gives anger time to grow roots.

Killing Anger Requires Dealing With the Heart, Not Just Managing Behavior

Assertion

- Jesus is arguing that our hearts must be transformed.

Possible Objection

- Okay, but anger feels automatic. I can't just turn it off.

Application

- Choose a response shaped by grace, not reaction.
- Biblical Grounding: Colossians 3:13 "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."
- Why it matters: You don't overcome anger by willpower alone—you overcome it by remembering how you've been treated by God.

Conclusion

- Here's the question: Are you building fences...or bridges?