



First Baptist Church Selmer

SERMON ON THE MOUNT • JESUS & ANGER • MATTHEW 5:21-26 • 9/21/2025

MAIN POINT

Anger isn't the problem; it's a symptom of the problem. Our anger reveals our hearts that must be changed by Jesus alone.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most ridiculous thing you got angry about this past week? Why do you think you reacted the way you did?

In your life, what is anger usually a sign of? Discontent? Not getting your way? Past hurts? Explain.

What is the best advice you have been given on how to deal with anger?

Jesus' followers are to have *"righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees"* (Matt. 5:20). Jesus taught that God's laws from the Old Testament were about much more than mere outward compliance. God's intent is for people to want to please Him with heart attitudes as well as actions. Whereas the law said people must not murder, Jesus expanded the teaching on murder to include the attitude of a person's heart. Jesus urged His followers to seek reconciliation as soon as they knew of a need for it (Eph. 4).

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:21-22.

21 *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'* 22 *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."* (ESV)

Jesus was not only the fulfillment of the Law, but also the Lawgiver. In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus gave a corrective commentary six different times, contrasting what the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were teaching the people as opposed to what God's true intent of the Law was. As He stated the common interpretation of a particular law, He explained what God's laws actually require: *"You have heard it said . . . but I say."* Jesus spoke with the authority of God Himself.

Read Exodus 20:13. How did Jesus interpret the commandment not to commit murder?

How is anger directly related to murder?

Jesus was teaching from the Ten Commandments, with which His audience would have been familiar. The ancestors of those listening to Jesus were the Israelites of Moses' day. Both at the original giving of the Ten Commandments and in their repetition near the end of Moses' life, the Sixth Commandment was do not murder (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17). This was a command against homicide, the deliberate taking of human life by another. The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day limited the application of the Sixth Commandment to physical murder. They believed that as long as they didn't commit murder and proper justice was rendered to those who did, they kept God's command.

How did Jesus' reinterpretation differ from the teaching of the Pharisees? How did this raise expectations for His followers?

Jesus took the command, which was straightforward, and elicited the spirit behind the law. Jesus' first example was the law against murder (v. 21). He showed that obeying this law was important, but equally so was the internal attitude of one's heart. The spirit of this law is to respond to personal offenses with forbearance and forgiveness rather than with anger and violence. That makes keeping this law much more difficult.

How do you distinguish between righteous anger and sinful anger?

Why is it so important that we deal with our anger and the source of our anger seriously?

Our anger must be dealt with. "First, anger ruins our health - both physically (Psalm 32, 38; Proverbs 3, 14:30) and spiritually (Acts 24:16; Psalm 66:18; 1 Timothy 2:8). Second, anger damages relationships (Ephesians 4:1-6, 4:25-5:2; Colossians 3:15-17; James 3:13-4:12; Luke 15:28). Our children, for instance, breathe the secondhand smoke of our anger. Third, and most importantly, our anger dishonors, offends, and grieves God (1 John 3:15; Ephesians 4:26-27, 30-31; Colossians 3:5-10)." - *The Gospel for Disordered Lives* by Robert D. Jones, Kristin L. Kellen, and Rob Green.

The command not to murder is not just a way to stop murder, but a tool for revealing that the heart of an angry person is the same as that of one who commits murder. Anger, which often leads to insult, essentially declares a position of moral superiority over another, which is a clear offense against God. Charles Quarles writes, "Calling a brother a 'moron' was essentially calling him unregenerate and unsaved and consigning him to hell."

Do you equate murder with anger as Jesus does, or do you think He is being extreme? Explain your thoughts.

What does anger do to our relationship with those we are angry with? What does it do to our relationship with God?

In 5:23-26, Jesus showed that those with true righteousness seek reconciliation with others as soon as they know a need for it. The first situation He mentioned involved making things right with a friend; the second showed that it's urgent to make things right even with an enemy.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:23-26.

23 "So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 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. 26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny." (ESV)

What is the relationship between anger and your worship of God?

Why do you think Jesus teaches that relational reconciliation is necessary for authentic worship?

Jesus' illustrations in 5:23-26 signal that the anger Jesus cited revolved around personal relationships. Such anger often is rooted in pride, perceived hurt, bitterness, hatred, malice, resentment, and the like. So, guard your heart; be merciful, never murderous. Jesus understood that the relationships we have with people reflect and affect our relationship with God. If we live in a way where we are at odds with others because of anger, then we are not prepared to give ourselves fully to God. "Without such reconciliation, gifts presented at the altar mean nothing." - Louis Barbieri, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

What barriers do people face in reconciliation? How can Christ help them overcome them?

How would our world be different if everyone practiced Jesus' instructions about reconciliation?

Reconciliation is difficult but necessary according to Scripture. But what happens if you seek reconciliation, but the other person chooses otherwise? Pastor John Piper states, "We are only responsible for what others hold against us when it is owing to real sin or blundering on our part. We are responsible to pursue reconciliation, but live with the pain if it does not succeed. In other words, we are not responsible to make reconciliation happen."

We must both pursue but also rest in the truth of God's Word. Romans 12:18 tells us the responsibility we have in regards to reconciliation, *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is most surprising to you about the expectations Jesus sets for His followers in today's passage?

Is there anyone with who you need to reconcile to experience authentic worship of God?

How can Jesus' teaching on anger help you share the gospel this week? Who can you share it with?

PRAYER

Pray that God would reveal the areas of our lives that elicit unrighteous anger. Confess it as sin and be reconciled to God and to one another. Pray for our church that God would create an environment of openness and reconciliation, so that issues of anger would be handled with immediate obedience to Christ.

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 5:21-26

In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus explained the previous verse (v. 20) with six illustrations often called “the antitheses.” Jesus quoted a law and then showed how the behavior of a Christian is to exceed the letter of that law. In each illustration, Jesus focused on the believer’s motive and heart. You shall not murder is the Sixth Commandment. It had been said to our ancestors and was rightly accepted as a standard of behavior. It was the rule, but would it meet the test for a follower of Jesus?

Jesus traced the act of murder to its motive (v. 22). Anger refers to a long-simmering anger that devalues its object, as opposed to a flare-up of anger. Though both are “temporary insanity,” Jesus had simmering anger in mind here because of its potential long-term destruction. Brother is clearly a fellow Christian, though this verse does not allow anger at non-Christians. Subject to judgment envisions a courtroom scene where the accused is judged. Transgression leads to judgment.

Specific examples of anger include calling another believer a fool or a moron. The former word is a harsh-sounding Aramaic word and difficult to translate. It is akin to a curse that calls into question a person’s mental capacity. “Empty-headed” is a basic meaning. The second word focuses more on a person’s moral character. Both words express extreme contempt, and that is the emphasis here. All anger is dangerous, though some is justified. But no one should carry or nurture anger or allow it to fester or to devalue another person. The judgment that follows each expression of anger is serious. He made the seriousness of his point by mentioning hellfire, or literally “the fire of Gehenna,” a term derived from the name for the valley of Hinnom southwest of Jerusalem. This smoldering garbage dump served as an apt illustration of hell.

Verses 23-24 are the key to understanding the standard of righteousness that should characterize a believer. Offering your gift at the altar refers to the literal handing of the sacrifice to the priest. This important ritual, however, was not more important than a relationship with a fellow believer. Be reconciled with your brother underscores the truth

that a relationship is more important than ritual. Remember, no one could outdo the Pharisees in ritual and law-keeping. Christianity, however, is all about right-hearted relationships.

A second example of the need for reconciliation concerns a civil matter where the two parties reach a settlement before going to the judge. It also emphasizes the importance of right relationships (v. 25). The last penny (v. 26) refers to the second smallest Roman coin. Judgment is sure for believers who harbor anger toward another Christian. Any time we put others outside the realm of our grace, we open ourselves to God's judgment. The examples in verses 23-26 underscore the need for decisive action in dealing with ongoing anger.