

Small Group Guide: "Fathers and Anger"

Based on Ephesians 6:1-4 and Matthew 5:21-26

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share a positive memory with your father or a father figure in your life. What made that moment special?

Key Scripture Passages

- **Ephesians 6:1-4** - Children and fathers
- **Matthew 5:21-26** - Jesus on anger
- **Romans 3:21-26** - Righteousness through Christ

Sermon Summary

This Father's Day message challenged us to examine what lies beneath the surface of our hearts—particularly anger. While murder is universally condemned, Jesus calls us to a higher standard: dealing with the root causes of anger, bitterness, and unresolved conflict. As fathers and family members, we're called to honor one another, seek reconciliation, and let our light shine in our homes first.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding Anger (15 minutes)

1. **Shawn shared that "emotions are not good or bad—they're like gauges in a car."** How does this perspective change the way you view your own anger?
2. **What is the difference between righteous anger and unrighteous anger?** Can you think of biblical examples of each? What about examples from your own life?
3. **Read Ephesians 4:26-27.** What does it mean to "not let the sun go down while you are still angry"? Why is this timing important?

Section 2: Parents and Children (15 minutes)

4. **Fathers: How does Ephesians 6:4 convict or encourage you?** What does it look like practically to "not exasperate your children"?
5. **The sermon stated: "Disciplining and loving and setting boundaries is a way in which our children feel loved."** Do you agree? How do we balance boundaries with grace?
6. **Why is it important for parents to apologize to their children when they're in the wrong?** What message does this send about God's authority versus our own?

Section 3: Below the Surface (15 minutes)

7. **Jesus raised the bar from "don't murder" to "deal with your anger and prejudices."** What are some "below the surface" issues that Jesus might want to address in your life?
8. **Shawn shared his story about using anger as a tool to get what he wanted.** Have you ever weaponized anger? What was the cost?
9. **The sermon distinguished between mercy and forgiveness:**

- **Mercy frees another person from punishment**
- **Forgiveness frees yourself from resentment**

How does understanding this difference help you move toward reconciliation?

Section 4: Moving Toward Reconciliation (15 minutes)

10. **Read Matthew 5:23-24.** Why does Jesus tell us to leave our gift at the altar and first be reconciled? What does this say about the priority of relationships?
11. **Who came to mind during the sermon when Shawn talked about unresolved conflict?** (You don't have to share the name, but consider the relationship.)
12. **What is one practical step you can take this week to:**
 - Ask for forgiveness from someone you've wronged?
 - Extend mercy to someone who has hurt you?
 - Give yourself the gift of forgiveness?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Anger is an emotion, not inherently sinful, but we must address it quickly and not let it take root.**
- ✓ **God's standard goes beyond what's legal—He cares about our hearts, thoughts, and attitudes.**
- ✓ **Fathers are called to bring up children in the instruction of the Lord without exasperating them.**
- ✓ **Ministry starts in the home—letting our light shine begins with those closest to us.**
- ✓ **Mercy frees others; forgiveness frees ourselves.**
- ✓ **Unresolved conflict gives the devil a foothold in our lives.**

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice this week:

1. **Make the Call/Send the Text:** Reach out to someone you need to reconcile with—a parent, child, sibling, or friend. Take the first step toward restoration.
2. **Ask for Forgiveness:** Identify someone you've wronged and humbly ask for their forgiveness without justifying your actions.
3. **Release Resentment:** Spend time in prayer releasing bitterness you've been carrying. Pray Jesus' prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."
4. **Honor Your Father:** If your father is still living, reach out and express gratitude. If he has passed, honor his memory or pray for healing from past hurts.
5. **Examine Your Triggers:** Journal about what makes you angry. Ask God to reveal root causes and areas that need healing.

Prayer Focus

Pray for one another in these areas:

- For fathers to lead their families with patience and godly instruction
 - For healing in broken or strained family relationships
 - For freedom from long-held bitterness and resentment
 - For courage to initiate difficult conversations toward reconciliation
 - For the greater church in Cincinnati to be unified and effective
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Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Have someone close in prayer, specifically asking God to:

- Reveal areas of unresolved anger in our hearts
 - Give us courage to pursue reconciliation
 - Help us extend both mercy and forgiveness
 - Strengthen fathers to lead with love and patience
 - Free us from the devil's foothold of bitterness
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Before Next Week

Accountability Question: Come prepared to share (if comfortable) how God worked in your reconciliation efforts this week.

Memory Verse: *"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."* — Ephesians 4:26-27