



Session #5 - Anger Must Fall

Orientation: Do you ever wonder why the world seems to be so full of angry people? It may be because anger, whether overt or buried, has a payoff for the angry person.

Psychologist Leon Selzer says that when we feel angry, our brains secrete the hormone norepinephrine, which is a painkiller. The anger thus helps us to numb whatever other feeling triggered it. That numbed feeling may be fear or hurt or the pain of rejection or many other possibilities. Anger makes us feel like we're in control—even when we're losing control of the anger.

But many of us, especially Christians, have been taught that it's not okay to get angry. So instead of exploding in rage, we bury our anger. We smile and say that we've forgiven those who hurt us when really, we've only minimized the degree of pain the hurt has caused us. We say that we're "over it" when deep down we're not over it at all. The very thought of letting the other person off the hook for what he or she did fills us with a tough, stubborn "no." We want that person to pay a price for the wrongdoing.

Wanting the other person to pay the just consequences of his or her actions is at the very heart of anger. An in itself, there's nothing wrong with that longing for justice. God is a God of justice, so going to Him with our anger is the best thing we could possibly do with it.

In this session, we will come to grips with our anger and look at what's involved in dealing with it positively. We will talk to ourselves about our anger the way God talks to us, acknowledging that we aren't perfect and yet God has reconciled us to himself. God wants to be our avenger while we let go of the demand to make the other person pay.

Even though anger can feel good in the moment, unexpressed or wrongly expressed anger harms us and others. We don't have to be stuck with that harm.

Freedom is at hand.

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

James 1:19-21 (ESV)



Welcome to Session #5! Open it up!

1. How was anger dealt with in your family when you were growing up?

2. If one of your friends said something that really angered you, would you more likely speak up at the time, say nothing, or secretly plan to retaliate?

3. Did you take part in any of last week's "Between Sessions" activities? Share your reflections. Any insights from engaging in these activities?
Read the Orientation from the website.

Hearing it from the Word!

Listen for any fresh insights as this portion of the David and Goliath story is read in **1 Samuel 17:26-31 (ESV)**.
²⁶ And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" ²⁷ And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him." ²⁸ Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." ²⁹ And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" ³⁰ And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before. ³¹ When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him.

Explore it!

4. What was one thing that stood out to you from the Scripture, and why?

5. How did Eliab try to provoke David? What anger does he seem to have against David? How did David respond to his brother?

Watch the video segment for session five, and jot down some notes using the comments below:

- Anger has a tendency to simmer beneath the surface of our lives and then suddenly burst into flames when something provokes us.
- Adolescents in society today are crippled by anxiety. They live in a cauldron of stimuli that they can't get away from, don't want to get away from, or don't know how to get away from.
- When David came to the battlefield and started asking questions about Goliath, it caused his brother Eliab to fire angry darts at him. He first questioned David's motives about coming there.
- Our anger is provoked when people question our motives. David's brother Eliab did this when he asked David his reasons for coming to the battlefield.
- Our anger is provoked when others belittle us. Eliab did this when he asked David with whom he left "those few sheep in the desert."
- Our anger is provoked when people attack our character. Eliab did this when he told David he was conceited and wicked and had only come to watch the battle.
- There are several different forms of anger: Wrongly placed anger, rightly placed anger, suppressed anger.
- When we go to the cross, we focus on our own imperfections (we have wronged God as well) and allow the Lord to be the avenger of our wrongs.



Reflect on it in Group Discussion:

6. What was wrong with Eliab's anger? Can you identify with him in any ways? If so, how?

7. Sometimes we're angry for a genuine wrong done to us. Based on the teaching you just heard, what would you say is a healthy way of dealing with that anger?

8. What's your usual way of dealing with anger? (If you're never angry, that's a way of dealing with it.) How do you respond when a goal of yours is blocked?

9. Is it helpful for you to think of God as your avenger? Why did you answer as you did?

10. Forgiveness means acknowledging the wrong done but not holding it against the other person. How readily do you forgive? Are there people you find it hard to forgive? If so, why?

11. What helps you know that you are a loved son or daughter of God? How does knowing that help you forgive?

Apply it to your life...Living from Victory

(Group needs one backpack loaded with heavy items.)

Anger is a physical emotion, and this exercise is designed to put you in touch with the physicality of anger.

Ask for a volunteer to put on the backpack. Next, ask that person to adopt their physical signs of anger: Tense your jaw, furrow your brows, squint your eyes, ball-up your fists, and tense your biceps. Your facial expression should be just short of a lion-like growl. With your body and face in this state, practice walking across the room and back again. This is what it's like to carry anger around with you all day.

When that person has had a minute or so to feel the weight of anger, have him or her give the backpack to the next volunteer. This person should put on the backpack and adopt the angry expression. Repeat until all group members have had a chance to wear the backpack and the angry body language. Those with back problems can skip the backpack and just do the angry body language.

When everyone has had a chance to experience the activity, take a few minutes to debrief:

- ✓ What would it be like to walk around like that all day?
- ✓ What did it feel like to take off the backpack and let go of the angry body language?
- ✓ If it feels so good to let our bodies relax, why do you suppose we so often hold on to anger and refuse to forgive?

To go deeper, check out the church website under the LifeGroups tab for ASK resources.

Pray within your group...

To close, read aloud Psalm 32. Don't forget to pray for each other!!



Going Deeper #5 ~ ASK ~ Ask, Seek, Knock!

There will be a time for you to share these reflections at the next session.

Ask: Take an Inventory.

Take a self-inventory (See next page). As you work through the list below, does anything stick out at you as something you're angry about? Circle the statements that bear the most weight in your life.

The list uses "parent" a lot, but you can put someone else in the story. A friend. A coworker. A boss. A grandparent. An ex-boyfriend or girlfriend. A brother or sister. A coach. A teacher. A pastor. An industry. An institution. A country. A government. A terrorist. The circumstances of life. God. You feel betrayed or belittled or cheated. You wanted something but didn't get it.

If you have trouble identifying with the word *angry*, think about other words for it, such as *annoyed*, *irritated*, *bitter*, or *frustrated*.

After taking the survey, make a few notes about what it was like to identify who you're angry at and why.

Seek Worship: Celebrate Your Adoption.

It's hard to forgive someone for taking something from you that you need to survive. The good news is that everything you truly need to have a flourishing life is guaranteed to you through Jesus Christ. You have been adopted as a son or daughter of God, and all the unsearchable riches of his grace are yours. No matter what the people who hurt you did to you, you're more than okay. You still hurt, but you're alive and well because you belong to God.

Take some time to celebrate that so that it sinks in. Right now, you may feel like what was stolen from you is of much more value than what God has given. As long as you feel that way deep down, forgiveness will be difficult. So, put some energy into reversing that belief by celebrating what God has done for you.

Here's a passage to bask in: **Romans 8:14-18 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"* ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.* ¹⁸ *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Read this passage aloud to yourself a couple of times. Then choose a phrase or sentence that especially speaks to you. Maybe it's the part about being heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Maybe it's that your present sufferings aren't worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in you. Maybe it's just that phrase, "Abba, Father."

Zero in on this phrase or sentence and read it aloud to yourself. IF you're alone and won't be overheard read it loudly. Exult in it. However you've been hurt, it doesn't compare with God's great love for you and how that love can change you if you let it. Pray your chosen phrase or sentence back to God in worship.

- Abba, Father, I worship you because _____.
- You are _____ and what you have done for me is _____.

After ten minutes with this passage, go back to your list of things that you're angry about. In light of what God has done for you, can you find it in your heart to forgive, and let go of some of that anger? Not stuff it back down inside you. Not minimize it, like it didn't really hurt you. But acknowledge the hurt and say you choose to not make the other person pay. It's in God's hands. He will give you justice in His time. In the meantime, remember that you are His adopted son or daughter.

Write down a few notes about reflecting on Scripture to share with your group next week.

Knock and Proclaim: Tell Someone about Forgiveness.

If you've chosen to forgive someone, or if you're getting to the place of being able to forgive someone, tell a friend. Tell them what that's like for you. Ask your friend to pray for you in the process. Telling someone will make the decision more real for you. Remember that the goal here is to set you free from the prison of bitterness!

Jot down a few notes about this experience to share with the group next week.



Self-Inventory

Circle as many as apply, and write in names or other information in the blanks if you feel comfortable doing so. No one need see this but you.

The list uses "parent" a lot, but you can put someone else in the story. A friend. A coworker. A boss. A grandparent. An ex-boyfriend or girlfriend. A brother or sister. A coach. A teacher. A pastor. An industry. An institution. A country. A government. A terrorist. The circumstances of life. God. You feel betrayed or belittled or cheated. You wanted something but didn't get it.

If you have trouble identifying with the word *angry*, think about other words for it, such as *annoyed*, *irritated*, *bitter*, or *frustrated*.

- _____ hurt me.
- _____ abandoned me.
- _____ wasn't interested in me.
- _____ picked somebody or something else over me.
- _____, who I cared about, was emotionally unavailable to me.
- _____ left my family.
- My dad/mom cheated on us. He/she didn't just cheat on my other parent, he/she cheated on all of us.
- My parent lives with another family.
- I'm angry because other kids get my parent's attention every day.
- I'm angry because my dad or mom is too busy for me.
- I'm angry with my dad or mom because he/she didn't take care of us.
- I'm angry with my dad or mom because he/she didn't take care of himself/herself.
- I'm angry with _____ because he/she won't face the facts.
- _____ is too aggressive / too passive.
- _____ embarrasses me.
- I'm angry with God because _____.
- I'm angry because I didn't get to say good-bye.
- I'm angry because of all the hurtful things that _____ has called me.
- I'm angry because of all the things that _____ has said to me.
- I'm angry because _____.
- I'm angry because _____.
- I'm angry because _____.

Now, look back at the anger statements you circled. Write a **W** besides the items that are wrongly placed anger. Write an **R** beside the ones that are rightly placed anger. Write an **S** beside the ones that have been suppressed anger in your life—maybe this is the first time you've faced the fact that you feel annoyed or bitter or frustrated about this.

When you're done, take a step back and see what you can learn from the W's, R's, and S's. Is there a pattern to your anger?