

Joke: A man buys a brand new sports car and on his first drive he passes a pick up truck on the wrong side.

The truck driver is big and has anger issues. Furious, he speeds up and decides to teach the man a lesson at the next stop light just a few miles ahead.

They reach a red light where the pick up driver cuts in front of the car and blocks him in. He steps out of the truck and drags the man out of the car. The driver of the car is now quite shaken.

The truck driver removes a piece of chalk and a knife from his truck, draws a circle on the road and tells the frightened car driver to stand in the circle.

He begins screaming at the man "If you leave the circle you will be sorry" and then proceeds to cut up the nice leather seats in the car. Thinking he had done enough he turns around to find the man smiling.

Now even more angry he returns to his truck and gets out a baseball bat and smashes all the windows and tail lights. As he looks over again he notices the man is now giggling.

Starting to rage now, the truck driver drops the bat and slashes all his tires after which the man just bursts out laughing.

Noticing the laughing he loses it, gets a can of gasoline from the truck, pours it all over the brand new sports car and sets it on fire.

When he turns around to see man's reaction, he is just enraged as the man is nearly falling over with fits of laughter.

Mystified, the trucker asks " what could possibly be so funny?"

The man replies, "while you weren't looking, I stepped out of the circle four times!"

The Enemy Within - Week 1 anger

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What makes you angry?

Maybe it's when someone cuts you off in traffic, rude people surly that's it, how about arrogant people, those who think they know everything about everything. I worked with someone like that once. Maybe it's your spouse that makes you angry. He always leaves his underwear on the floor or she squeezes the toothpaste from the middle of the tube.

What makes you angry. Your boss, the people you work with.

Honestly, there are some things that should get us angry, things like child abuse.

Truth is anger in and of itself is not sin.

As a matter of fact anger can be good if it leads you to a righteous act like finding a way to help that child who has been abused.

But of course if it causes you to sin well that's a whole other story.

What makes you angry? Here's a bit of information you may not know. There are fifteen different verses in the Bible that have both the word anger and fire in the same verse.

And in reality, anger is a lot like fire. Fire can be good. It can warm you. You can cook with it. But, it can be bad like just recently in California all those houses destroyed because a fire broke out and took everything in its path with it.

And so, today, in case you haven't picked up on it yet, we are going to talk about anger.

Ephesians chapter 4, is where we will begin as we start a new series called “The Enemy Within.”

What makes you angry?

For me, although there are some big things that really make me angry, if I’m being honest more often than not it’s the little things that trip me up.

Joy and I sometimes go to the movies for a date night and there have been people at the theater who. . .and maybe you’ve seen this as well, but there are people who break proper movie etiquette.

I mean how can you do that. . .they even give you a public service announcement on the big screen on what not to do. They tell you silence your phones, don’t talk, don’t text, don’t ruin the movie.

How much plainer can it be. . .yet

Some people will take phone calls, someone calls them and they answer the phone. Now, if your a doctor on call, ok maybe, but I have even a better idea. . .wait until your not on call. By the way that has never been the case.

I had someone who was sitting right next to me with two kids now mind you they only had three seats available next to me.

But this guy must of made 6 or 7 calls to his wife to find out where she was and after the 4th or 5th time he finally leans over and says sorry maybe I should go outside of the theater and wait. Ya think.

And when she finally arrived maybe 20 minutes or so into the movie one of the kids had to sit on a lap, remember only three seats, and then they just continued to move between mom and dad during most of the show.

I've had people text throughout a movie there're right in front of you and all you see is the light from their phone screen as they text away during the movie. I one time saw someone scrolling through their pictures a few rows in front of me. Mind you movie had been playing for awhile. I finally had enough and went over to them and asked, nicely I might add, I didn't want to be Christian-ish, to put their phone away.

But the one that really tries my patience is the people that talk throughout the whole movie. They never shut up. And there are two kinds of talkers. The first one are those who never know what's going on. "Who's that guy? What'd she say? What just happened? And it seems like it goes on and on throughout the whole movie. They just can't or refuse to pay attention during the show. Always asking what I miss?

Then, there's the other folks, the ones that knows everything that's about to happen. He did it. This next scene is so cool hold on to your hat. And they just talk and talk. Telling you about what's about to take place. And let me say this I have never watched a movie in the theater so many times that I remember everything that will happen next. I have seen every Walker Texas Ranger a bunch of times and still don't always remember what's going to take place next in every episode. And I certainly wouldn't say it out loud if I did.

So, what is it that makes you angry?

Maybe the bigger question in dealing with anger that I want to ask today is this. . .

Are you giving the devil a guest room?

And maybe your thinking pastor that's a weird question where did that come from?

Well, let's look at Ephesians 4:26-27, it gives us a lot of insight into anger. The Bible says. . .

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NIV) - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

In your anger do not what? Do not sin.

That lets me know that to be angry in and of itself is not a sin.

In fact, there's a good kind of anger what we might call a righteous anger, and that's when we get angry at something that angers the heart of God, and we do something righteous because of that anger.

There's another kind of anger, though, that we could call sinful anger, and that's when we just get angry at something that doesn't really matter. And I've meant a few people that are angry just to be angry.

Or maybe it does matter, but it leads us to do the wrong thing, something outside the heart and the will of God.

The scripture says, In your anger do not sin.

Then the Scripture continues with . . . Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry

Now, let's pause right there for a moment.

I used to think this verse applied to marriages, and it does. Don't go to bed mad at your spouse. But I also believe this verse applies beyond just marriages, I think it applies to all sorts of relationships.

I can't say Joy and I have been 100 percent perfect of not going to bed angry at each other but we've done pretty good. But if this verse applies to more than just marriages, and I believe it does, how many times have you maybe gone to bed angry at someone else.

And if this scripture applies to all of our lives, “Don’t go to bed angry. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.”

Then we need to deal with it. Because the next verse tells us to not give the devil a foothold.

The Greek word that is translated foothold is the word *topote*. It literally means opportunity, it means place or location. It very literally means room. Don’t give the devil a guest room.

Don’t allow him, through the open door of anger to live inside of your hearts.

And there are all sorts of examples of people who did this in scripture.

One of the very first is between two brothers, Cain and Abel. You may know the story. They both brought their offerings to the Lord, and God accepted Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s. And because God didn’t accept his offering Cain became very angry.

Now let me just say this about the offerings. Abel’s was given with the right heart and motive Cain’s was not. That’s why one was accepted and the other not. And let me just add that on this side of the cross we are made acceptable and pleasing to God through Christ not on what we bring to the table.

And Cain opened up the door to the evil one who came on the attack.

Look at God’s words to him in Genesis 4:6-7.

Genesis 4:6-7 (NIV) - Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

And through the open door of anger, sin entered into Cain's heart, and if you know the story, he ended up killing his brother, Abel. Why? Over his sinful anger.

I realize that is quite extreme and I have had things get me angry never to place that I even thought about killing someone.

And that's one of the keys in that verse, God let's Cain know that he can choose to do what's right. He says, you must rule over it.

But maybe there's someone here or watching online that deals with their anger like I have at times with what I will call a below the surface anger.

It's not real visible, but just beneath the surface, there's this level of frustration. Maybe you're one that's easily angered. I used to be but God has dealt with me with that.

Maybe people just make you crazy. You're over critical. People at your work are just always getting under your skin, and your spouse is doing something that just ohhhhh. . .

Some of you may be angry at society. Our government. There may even be some of you who are angry at God. Oh, maybe you don't voice it but just beneath the surface. "Well, God, you know, if I were You, I wouldn't do things this way."

And you're not quite to the point of full-blown anger, but you're kind of simmering. Like water. It's about to boil, but it just hasn't gotten quite to that point yet, your not at 212 degrees maybe 208 and your just simmering your at just below the surface anger.

And I want to talk about two types of anger today. Sinful anger and a sanctified or righteous anger.

Let's start today by talking about the sinful anger first, because unfortunately, that may be far more common in most of our lives.

How do we often deal wrongly with our anger? And when it is dealt with wrongly it often times becomes sinful. Remember what we read in Ephesians 4. . .in your anger do not sin.

Well, there's two ways and, maybe by talking about these, you will identify some of the wrong ways that you, personally, have handled anger. Both of which are not good.

There's two types. There's spewers and stewers.

Spewers, if you are taking notes, they are the ones who express their anger. If you are a spewer, when you get angry, everyone around you knows about it. And I hate to admit I've been that a few too many times in my life.

Then there's the stewers that's the person who keeps everything thing in.

Now I'm going to give you a tough Scripture to hear if you happen to be a spewer. Ready?

Proverbs 29:11 (NLT) - Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.

There's a story about Billy Sunday he was a great evangelist in the late 1800's, and he actually preached on this verse. He was talking about the foolishness of just letting it rip, and one lady afterwards came and said, "Pastor Sunday, I beg to differ. I just blow up and then it's all over."

To which he replied, "You blow up and it's all over?" And she said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, so does a shotgun, but think of all the damage it causes."

And maybe some of you might say, "Well, I just blow up and then I'm fine."

And truthfully you may fine, but there may be lots of wounded people around you.

It's foolish to give full vent to anger.

Proverbs 14:17 (NIV) - A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated.

And as I mentioned a few minutes ago God has helped me in this area. Years ago, I was much more quick tempered.

A quick-tempered person does foolish things. I have more often than I care to admit said things out of anger that I wish I could grab and haul them back in. Has that ever happened to you or I'm I the only one?

Truth is I've seen to many people with an anger problem destroy important relationships. Lose their jobs.

So, there's spewers.

Then, there's the second group of people, those who generally just hold things in. Those are the stewers. Instead of expressing their anger, they tend to suppress it.

We get upset and rather than talking it out in a healthy way, we hold it in.

And honestly, we can look a bit self-controlled, but on the inside, the below the surface reality is that there's something smoldering, and it could catch flame at any minute.

(Talk about fire at Boy Scouts)

And the truth is, that smoldering thing is really the opposite of love.

You see, love keeps no records of wrong, but stewers, they keep long lists of offenses. “Well, she did this. . .and he did that. . .and, well, you know. . .and he did this and they stew on it. . .they just let it simmer.

And the sin of stewing anger has destroyed so many marriages. Couples get upset over, often, small things and someone will go off and the next thing you know, they’re both stewing, going to bed, giving the devil a guest room in their lives.

And when it really gets difficult is when both are stewers and you go to bed angry and what you do is you go to bed in the fighting position. That’s where he faces one wall and she faces the other and you never let any part of your body touch.

As a matter of fact the first one who touches loses points.

And all the time you’re laying over there and you are just stewing on it, “Well, he better talk first. I can’t believe he said that, I’m not talking.”

Sometimes you try to see if the other is still stewing by stretching a bit and you move a foot over to enemy territory to see how they react.

And in Luke 15:28, we have a couple other brothers and the older brother in the story of the prodigal son, you may remember the younger brother basically said, “Dad, give me all my stuff.”

Dad did and then he went out and blew it all. Partied hard. Lost everything found himself in a pigs pen and he decides to go back home, and to everybody’s shock, the father because he still loved him, received him, and not only just loved him and received him, but threw this big party for him as well.

And the older brother started stewing, “Well, I kept all the rules and I did everything and this isn’t fair.”

And he, because of his stewing anger, the scripture says

Luke 15:28 (NIV) - "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

Honestly, how many of you would say, "Yeah, I may not be as much of a spewer, but I can be a stewart."

What do we do? How do we handle our anger? Well, the answer is, it depends on what kind of anger it is.

Because if it's a sanctified anger, where that which angers us is consistent with that which angers the heart of God? Then your going to handle a bit different then if it's an anger that's leading us to do something wrong?

How do we handle our anger? And again the answer is, it depends.

What do we do with it? If you are taking notes, if we have sinful anger, identify that and ask the Spirit of God to put it out.

Proverbs 17:14 NIV) - Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam. So, what do you do? The Bible says, "So," what? So drop the matter before a dispute breaks out. Drop it. Let it go.

And some of you are going to say, "But pastor, you don't understand. I just can't do that. I'm not wired like you.

When I get upset, I just. . .

And if you think you can't control your anger you are deceiving yourself. You can control it. Certainly, the Spirit of God can bring it under control.

And maybe there's some of you who say, "Well, you just don't understand."

To which I say if only you knew. But I can almost guarantee you, you can control your blow up.

Let me give you an example, your ranting and raving with someone and it's going back and forth.

And then in the middle of your heated discussion your phone rings and it's all of a sudden. . .

"Hello. I'm fine. Praise God. Would love that thanks. Let's get together. Blessings. Praying for you too.

How can you do that? You choose how you respond and you bring it under control.

And honestly this past week there were times I could have gotten angry at something, and probably normally would have. But choose not to.

So, they're running late. Drop it. Somebody didn't load the dishwasher just right, they put the cup on the wrong side, drop it.

They tried. Somebody at work is always getting under your skin. Drop it. There are some things that are just not worth getting angry about.

What do we do instead of choosing to get angry over all the stuff. .

James 1:19-20 (NIV) - My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Slow to speak, quick to listen, slow to become angry.

Let me tell you some good news about me. I am becoming much slower to anger, and it's a noticeable difference. Why? Because God is transforming me so I can be more like Him. Because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Did you know there are seven different books of the Bible, seven different writers, who all captured the same quality of God.

Do you know what quality of God these seven different writers picked up on? They all wrote that God is slow to anger and abounding in love.

And I just want to take a moment and say thank you to God because it wasn't that long ago that I was much quicker in letting my anger get the best of me. But now I'm becoming much more slow to anger and abounding in love.

Slow to anger, abounding in love. If you've got an anger problem, let God deal with it. No excuses. He wants to make you more like Him. If it's sinful anger, God wants to set you free from it.

But what if it's what I called sanctified or righteous anger? You are angry at something that's consistent with the heart of God, something that makes Him mad.

And listen church if we are a follower of Jesus we ought to, live what he loves and hate what he hates.

And when you look at scripture, you can see that Jesus, got angry.

But He didn't sin. It was a righteous anger.

And there are several examples.

One is the story where there's this guy with a shriveled up hand, who happened to be in the synagogue, and it was on the Sabbath day and there were people there watching Jesus, waiting for him to maybe heal on the Sabbath. . .what a horrible sin that was to do something like heal on the Sabbath.

And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, asked them a question. He said, "What's more lawful? Doing something good or do nothing at all on the Sabbath, to heal or not to heal?"

And they didn't answer Him. Jesus got angry.

This is what the scripture says. . .

Mark 3:5 (NIV) - He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

Look at it. . .He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts

Let's just pause right there. He was mad. He was angry. And truth is if you or I were Jesus, all knowing and all powerful, we might have lost it. "I'm sick and tired of you trying to trip me up. All I'm trying to do is the will of my Father. And because you ticked me off for just wanting to heal someone I'm going to call down fire from heaven."

We might do something like that. In our anger, we might sin.

Jesus, though instead said to the men, "Stretch out your hand." And when he stretched out his hand it was completely restored.

Instead of allowing His anger to cause Him to sin, His anger caused Him to do something righteous.

So, some of you need to let the Spirit of God fan that flame.

Maybe there's a person that always tries to get under your skin. Get angry not at them but the enemy who is trying to be a guest in a room of your heart to keep you from walking in the joy of the Lord which by the way is your strength. And be a witness of the goodness of God.

Maybe the enemy wants to keep you distracted with stuff that's not important and you spend hours scrolling through social media and then you get mad because your day flew by. Get angry not at yourself, not at Facebook, but at the enemy that wants to set up camp in your heart to keep you from reaching what God has called you to.

May we be a church who diminishes in sinful anger and increases in a righteous anger. Get angry about the things that anger the heart of God. Fan the flame. Stir up the gift that is in you.

Sinful anger and righteous anger. How do we respond?

If you've got an anger that is hurting other people, hurting your relationships or hurting you, you've got to put it out. It's not righteous it's the enemy within that needs to be put under your feet.

If there's sinful anger, pour the water of the Spirit of God on it and put it out. Don't let it smolder make sure it can't reignite.

On the other hand if you are angry at the things that anger the heart of God fan the flame. Pour a little gas on the fire. Let God ignite you in order to make an even bigger impact for His kingdom.

Let him set a fire down in your soul that you can't contain that you can't control.