



World Christian Fellowship

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Anger = Murder.

Matthew 5:21-48 Introduction

Matthew 5:21-26, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'* ²² *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.* ²³ *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.*

How can we maintain peaceful relationships with others?

After the fall in Genesis 3, God prophesied the discord that would occur in human relationships. The wife would desire to control her husband and the husband would try to dominate her (Genesis 3:16).

This fracture in marriage would spill over into all relationships.

In fact, in Genesis 4, we see the first murder, as Cain killed his brother Abel. Paul taught that hatred, discord, fits of rage, dissensions, and factions are part of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:19-21, *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Therefore, we are all prone to discord. Sadly, this discord is often greatest within families, including our church families.

In **Matthew 5:21-26**, Christ teaches the importance of maintaining peaceful relationships. God is watching and will judge those who live in discord.

Christ begins by considering the ultimate fracture of a relationship—murder. Then moves to the motive and acts which precede it.

Bible References to Anger

If we look through the Bible, we find many references to anger. We know that Moses, the prophets, and even Jesus got angry at times.

Is all the rage we are feeling today justified?

Proverbs 29:11, *A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*

Getting angry is a temptation. What we do after that can lead to sin. If God doesn't want us to vent our anger, we need to see what's worth getting mad about in the first place, and second, what God wants us to do with those feelings.

Psalms 37:7, *Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.*

Proverbs 20:22, *Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.*

There is a hint that something bigger is going on. These annoyances are frustrating, yes, but God is in control. If we truly believe that we can wait for him to work.

We don't need to jump in, thinking God's off napping somewhere.

Distinguishing between petty trifles and serious injustice can be difficult, especially when we are biased because we are the victim. We can blow things out of proportion.

Romans 12:12, *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Patience is not our natural reaction!

How about revenge?

Or holding a grudge?

Or shock when God doesn't immediately zap the other person with a lightning bolt?

Growing a thicker skin so these insults bounce off is not easy. We hear so much today about our "rights" that we see every slight, intended or not, as a personal attack against us. Much of what gets us angry is just thoughtlessness. People are rushed, self-centred, worried about their own little world.

Even when someone is deliberately rude, we need to resist the urge to lash out in kind. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His followers to abandon that "eye for an eye" attitude.

Foolish Consequences

We can seek to live our lives under the control of the Holy Spirit, or we can let the sinful nature of our flesh have its way.

It's a choice we make every day. We can either turn to the Lord for patience and strength or we can allow potentially destructive emotions like anger to run unchecked. If we choose the latter, God's Word cautions us over and over of consequences.

Proverbs 14:17, *A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated.*

Righteous Anger

We often view anger as an emotion we should avoid- a sin. But our anger isn't the problem, it's what we do with our anger that determines if we sin or not.

Ephesians 4:26, *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*

In fact, there are things in this world that should make us angry. We should be outraged by injustices, violence, greed, poverty, and death that run rampant all around us. That should stir up an anger deep within us because it's just not right. That anger is good. It is a righteous anger. It is the same anger that God feels when he sees the evil that is so pervasive in the world.

Righteous anger over evil is good, but in our anger, we should not sin.

In other words, we might be tempted to fight evil with evil. Through Jesus, we are shown a better way.

When stones are thrown at us, we don't throw them back. Instead, we love. Yes, that's unfair. Yes, that could cost us. But only love can truly stop evil.

That is exactly what Jesus did. When He got angry over the evil in this world, He never stooped to its level. In His anger, He did not sin.

So, what made Jesus Angry?

Let us see how those people did something that made Jesus mad, but it's hard to see it in ourselves. Instead of pointing the finger, look in the mirror.

1. The Human Condition

Humanity exists in a broken state, a fallen world. That should come as no surprise, the evidence is everywhere. Kids are starving, people are dying, broken families are the norm, mental health crises abound, war is commonplace, and pain and turmoil exist around every corner.

Jesus was angry about it.

John 11:35, *“Jesus wept.”*

Jesus was so overcome by the human condition, the death a friend faced, that he wept.

Jesus is reacting to the fallen condition of His people. He is distraught that people He cares for are experiencing pain. He was not overcome with grief over the loss of a friend.

Why did Jesus’ weep?

Because He feels empathy for His people.

Jesus feels empathy, but He responds with anger.

You might be wondering why God allows us to live in such conditions. The short answer is sin.

The longer answer is here:

What Is Sin?

Why Does God Allow Suffering?

The human condition because Jesus feels empathy for what we are facing.

2. Rules Being Placed Over People

The religious leaders in Jesus' day tended to value adherence to the law over caring for people, which is not what God intended.

The rules God established were supposed to help his people stay in right relationship with him and others.

The heart of the law was missed in the pursuit of following the law. In other words, they cared more about obeying the rules preciously that they missed what the rules were supposed to lead to.

Jesus continually broke the rules that the religious set up. Now to be clear, Jesus didn't break the law that God had established. Rather he broke the extra rules the religious leaders put in place to protect the law, and that made a lot of people mad.

Maybe the best example is Jesus' healing on the Sabbath (**Matthew 12:10, Luke 13:10-17, Luke 6:7, John 9:16**). To the

religious leaders, that was a no-no, because you were supposed to rest.

Jesus pushed back on this attitude and showed that people were more important. He healed people right in front of the Pharisees, just to show how serious he was.

Rules that kept people from Him.

3. Children Being Pushed Aside

Jesus had a special spot in his heart for kids.

He promises justice for those who harm Children.

Jesus proclaimed that you must be like a child to enter His Kingdom, and always made room for kids.

(Mark 9:36-37, Matthew 18:14, Luke 9:47-48).

One time, the disciples tried to rebuke Jesus for the time he was giving to children.

Big mistake. Jesus wasn't having it and insisted that kids deserve a seat in the kingdom of God **(Mark 10:13-16, Matthew 19:13-14).**

We may push kids aside, but Jesus never did.

Whenever a child is sick, hurt, in distress, lonely, abandoned, hungry, being abused, or told lies, I believe God is deeply moved.

We see that in Jesus as he walked this earth. He loves kids and can't stand to see them hurt.

Jesus got angry when the children being pushed aside.

4. Self-Righteous Judgmentalism.

We love to think we are better than others!

At least I am not as bad as so and so!!

We often think too highly of ourselves. We aren't as good as we think we are. Jesus got angry at those who thought they were all that.

Most commonly, Jesus got angry at the religious leaders because really, they were just religious phonies. They pretended to be good, but, they were just as messed up as everyone else. But they refused to admit and acknowledge their own sin.

Jesus famously calls out this hypocrisy by saying they wash the outside of the cup but ignore the inside.

Matthew 23:25-32.

They cared more about what people thought of them. They would appear to be righteous. In doing so, they ignored the

dirtiness of their heart. They ignored what was more important for the sake of appearances.

It's important to note Jesus wasn't angry at them because of their sin. He was angry because they pretended, they were better than they were.

Jesus came for the sinners and the sick, but He got angry at those who were self-righteous.

The religious leaders that pretended to have it all together, while ignoring the sinfulness of their heart.

5. Making It Difficult for People to Get to God.

The reason Jesus often got angry at the religious phonies is they made it hard for people to get to God. They complicated the rules, sold sacrifices for a profit, and belittled those who weren't as "good" as them.

All this so they could look better and feel better about themselves.

We do this ALL the time in our minds and behind people's backs. We tear people down so that we look better. We are no better.

This attitude made Jesus angry.

This is ultimately what caused Jesus to flip tables in the temple twice.

John 2:13-17.

Matthew 21:12-17.

What was happening was the religious leaders were selling the sacrifices required by God's law for a profit.

In other words, poor families who travelled far and at great expense to follow God's law were extorted, when they should have been helped.

This is where we see Jesus at His angriest. He makes a whip and drives them out.

Why?

Because they were making it harder for people to get to God all so they could make a few bucks.

Want to make Jesus mad?

Keep people he loves from having access to him.

People that made it more difficult to get to God.

6. Selfish Ambition.

Jesus often got mad when people had ulterior motives or selfish ambitions.

He critiques the Pharisees for praying loudly in public.

Matthew 6:5, *And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.*

Because they were doing so for their own gain. He once said he preferred the pennies of a widow to the large bags of coins from the Pharisees (**Mark 12:41-44**). He was admonishing the Pharisees because they didn't care about the heart of giving. It was all a show, and that made Jesus angry.

We tend to view God as a police officer. He just wants us to obey the law and if we don't, he will get us.

But God is not really after a submissive people who just blindly follow him. He is interested in a relationship with His people.

He wants our heart. Often what happens is we miss that the rules are there to bring us closer to him.

We see this attitude through Jesus. He saw through the facades that people put up. They were doing the right actions, but for the wrong reasons.

Jesus was more interested in what was going on in their hearts and not what they portrayed outwardly.

People that were doing the right things for selfish reasons.

Summary:

Jesus' anger was almost always directed towards the religious, and occasionally His followers.

He did not get angry or mad about the injustices done to Him.

People said and did some pretty nasty things to Him. Instead, His anger came out when someone was being kept from Him.

Jesus wanted all people to have the opportunity to know His love for them and when that opportunity was squashed by a rule, a person, or a system, He got mad.

I don't know about you, but I am not like that.

Most often my anger is directed towards those that have wronged me.

Maybe that's you too.

We have valid reasons for being mad at that person. They deserve it, but we follow a God that gave us what we needed instead of what we deserved. Jesus modelled this.

He didn't lash out, even though He had every right to. Instead, He reserved His anger for those that were being neglected and abused.

May we too show anger for what made Jesus mad.

May we be able to point to the cross where ALL of God's wrath was satisfied, even for abusers.

Guard our Hearts.

To maintain peaceful relationships, we must guard our hearts from evil thoughts including Anger.

Matthew 5:21-22, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Christ is not referring specifically to the sixth commandment. He is referring to the common misinterpretation by the Jews of the sixth commandment. This is the first of six misinterpretations that Christ will consider in the Sermon on the Mount. By explaining these, Christ teaches the Jews how their righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees to enter the kingdom of heaven.

When interpreting the sixth commandment, the Pharisees and scribes taught that if one had simply not murdered, he had obeyed the law and therefore was right with God.

This made people feel holy and prideful, since they had “perfectly” kept God’s law.

However, the Old Testament law, properly interpreted, did not only focus on outward observances. All the Old Testaments laws can be summarized in two commands—love God and love your neighbour.

Matthew 22:36-40, *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”*³⁷ *Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.*³⁹ *And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’*⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

They did not just prohibit or command certain actions, they also prohibited and commanded certain heart motives.

What If a person plans to murder someone, but at the last moment doesn’t because of fear of consequences or cowardice, is that person still just before God?

The answer is, “No!”

God wants righteousness on the inside and not just the outside.

Christ taught that the absence of committing physical murder did not by itself protect a person from God's judgment.

He said, if a person was angry, he would be subject to judgment. In ancient Israel, if a person committed murder, he would be tried by a human court. The judgment for manslaughter was capital punishment.

However, the second "judgment" Christ referred to was God's. This is clear since no human court can condemn a person for evil motives without the corresponding act.

God sees our heart, and he will judge us for anger. Though anger does not have the same consequence as murder, God sees it as murder since it's the seed of murder.

1 John 3:15, *"Everyone who hates his fellow Christian is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him."*

For peaceful relationships we must guard our hearts from poisonous thoughts and attitudes.

In Genesis 4, God counselled Cain to master the sin in his heart, so that he wouldn't murder his brother, and we must master our sinful hearts as well.

Genesis 4:6-7, *So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

To maintain right relationships, we must battle our sin on the heart-level.

When Christ says, "anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment."

Psalm 7:11, *"God is a just judge; he is angry throughout the day."*

Christ flipped tables and used a whip in the temple when people were being cheated and God dishonoured (John 2).

He called the Pharisees serpents, hypocrites, and whitewashed tombs because of their false teaching and evil hearts (Matt 23).

What is the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger?

- Righteous anger is concerned with injustice done towards others and dishonour towards God.
- Unrighteous anger is concerned only with personal injustice when people hurt or offend us.

When sin came into the world, the natural tendency towards anger in man's heart, which is part of being made in the image of God, became corrupt. It became consumed with defending self instead of God and others.

Only Christ perfectly demonstrated God's righteous anger.

- ✓ When others were mistreated, Christ was angry like a lion.
- ✓ When he was mistreated, he was gentle like a lamb.

Peter said this about how Christ responded to personal offense.

1 Peter 2:23, *“When he was maligned, he did not answer back; when he suffered, he threatened no retaliation, but committed himself to God who judges justly”*

We must do the same.

Are you angry because others are being hurt and God is being dishonoured?

Or is this anger just about me being personally offended?

On the cross, Christ prayed for his enemies by asking for God to forgive them and He died for them.

We must bless those who hurt us as well.

a) Our thoughts will be judged.

To keep ourselves from anger, we must recognize that unrighteous anger and thoughts will be judged by God.

Christ taught that judgment would not just happen because of murder, but also because of being angry.

God hates the sin in our hearts so much that He will discipline us because of it. Therefore, we must recognize it as a grievous sin.

Sadly, we are often just like the Pharisees and scribes. We think as long as we haven't cursed or slapped somebody then we are OK.

No, God hates anger, jealousy, pride, and all wrong attitudes that lead up to discord and ultimately murder. Therefore, we must recognize these wrong attitudes as murderous sins before God.

Are we angry with a friend, relative, or co-worker?

We must recognize it as a grievous sin against God their Creator.

b) God's Perspective.

To keep ourselves from anger, we must view things from God's perspective.

When Joseph was approached by his brothers, who originally sold him into slavery, he made this amazing statement.

Genesis 50:20, *"As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day"*

He viewed God as in control of evil and using it for good. It was the same with Job.

Job 1:21, *"The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. May the name of the Lord be blessed!"*

They both saw God in control of all circumstances including the evil of men and demons.

In addition, Christ, when He prayed for those who murdered Him said this way.

Luke 23:34, *"Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."*

He realized that sin and Satan had blinded them. It didn't make them less responsible, but it did negatively affect them.

Similarly, we must see our circumstances from God's perspective to keep ourselves free from anger. We must recognize God's sovereignty and the bondage of Satan and sin on this world.

Do you see God as in control of all events, even bad things that happen to you?

Romans 8:28, *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

c) Repentance.

To keep ourselves from anger, we must constantly repent of it. Heart sins are more difficult to stop than outward sins.

We forgive somebody, but when we see them, all those bad emotions come back. When they talk, sometimes judgmental thoughts flood our hearts. "They are so hypocritical so insincere! I can't believe them!"

1 Corinthians 13:5, *love holds "no record of wrongs" or it can be translated love does "not entertain evil thoughts"*

We must constantly repent of sins, and as we do that, God changes our hearts. At times, our ungodly heart motives may be so ingrained in us that we need to confess them to others and seek accountability and prayer, so that we can be free of them.

The title “devil” means “accuser” or “slanderer,” and that is often what Satan does to our hearts. He shoots arrows of suspicion, bitterness, jealousy, and anger at us.

In response, we repeat the bad experiences and evil words over and over again in our minds. Therefore, we must not only repent, but we must also resist the devil through prayer and God’s Word.

Conclusion.

James 4:7, *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

When Satan accuses, we must quote Scripture’s command to “entertain no evil thoughts,” “to hold no record of wrongs,” and “to bless and not curse.”

When he tries to stir us to commit evil acts towards them, we must quote Scripture’s command to feed our enemy when they are hungry and give them drink when they are thirsty.

Romans 12:20, *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*

We must resist the devil by God's Word and through submitting to God in prayer.

To keep ourselves from anger, we must overcome it with acts of love.

Romans 12:21, *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Not only do we overcome the evil in others by doing good, but also the evil in us. As we act in love, often our emotions follow. Most people simply follow their emotions instead of leading their emotions. As we pray for people and serve them, our hard hearts often become soft hearts.

If we are going to maintain peaceful relationships, we must fight anger and sinful thoughts on the heart-level.