

Cooling
the
Flames
of
Anger

January 12, 2019

SCHEDULE

▪ **Session 1: Understanding Anger**

9:00 am – 10:00 am

▪ **Session 2: The Role of Anger in Relationships**

10:10 am – 11:00 am

▪ **Session 3: Getting to the Heart of My Anger**

11:10 am – 12:00 pm

LUNCH BREAK

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

▪ **Session 4: Doing Anger Well**

1:00 pm – 1:50 pm

▪ **Session 5: Tools for Cooling the Flames**

2:00 pm – 2:50 pm

Evaluations

2:50 pm – 3:00 pm

Closing Prayer

3:00 pm

Introduction

- You are participating in a project designed by candidate Gary Hallquist, who is pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree in Biblical Counseling from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.
- As such, you agree to participate by taking a pre-test and a post-test, to evaluate your knowledge of the content of this workshop before it is presented, and after it is presented. Individual results will not be shared. Group results will be included in the Ministry Project Report.
- It is important that you attend all five sessions. Come back promptly after breaks and after lunch, so that we can stay on schedule.
- Take notes. Ask questions.

Unrealistic Expectations

- You will never struggle with anger again after this workshop.
- Attending this workshop will ensure you will never need counseling for your anger.
- All of your questions about anger will be answered today.

Realistic Expectations

- You will understand far more about anger than you did before today.
- You will have biblical tools to help you handle your anger and the anger of others when you leave today.
- You'll be tired of talking about anger by 3:00 pm. (Hopefully you won't be angry about it!)

Let's Get Started

- Pre-test (10 minutes)

“Do you do well to be angry?”
Jonah 4:4

Session 1: Understanding Anger

DEFINITION

Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure that occurs when a situation or another person's words or actions do not meet our expectations. Anger describes the emotion, the physical sensations, and the response of the angry person.

- Strong feeling of displeasure
- Situation, words, actions
- Meet our expectations
- Emotion
- Physical sensations
- Response

Where did anger come from?

- the imago Dei
 - “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26–27)

What happened?

- the fall
 - “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (Genesis 3:6)
 - “And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.” (Genesis 4:4b–5)
 - “When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.” (Genesis 5:3)

What’s the result?

- Human anger can be righteous or unrighteous.
- Most human anger is sinful.

Quote from Aristotle

“Anyone can become angry. That is easy.

But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way—that is not within everyone’s power and is not easy.”

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ANGER

- *The anger of God*
 - In the entire book of Genesis, the term “angry” is never used to describe God or his responses to mankind. The first time the Bible says God was angry is Exodus 4:14.
 - Five qualities of God’s anger (*Winston Smith*)
 - God’s anger is a redeeming anger.
 - God’s anger attacks what threatens His marriage relationship.
 - God’s anger is honest and invites honesty.
 - God’s anger is patient and timely.
 - God’s anger is sacrificial.
 - “God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” (Num 14:18a)
 - This couplet appears eight times in the Scriptures.
 - “He is God, and not man, or our sins would soon drown his love; yet above the mountains of our sins the floods of his mercy rise.” (*C. H. Spurgeon*)
 - God’s anger is directed at his covenant people far more often than at the pagan nations.
 - “Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses” (Exod 4:14)
 - “And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly” (Num 11:10)
 - “And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel” (Josh 7:1)

- “And they provoked the LORD to anger” (Judg 2:12)
- *The anger of Jesus*
 - Anger at the Pharisees: “And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart” (Mark 3:5)
 - Anger at his disciples: “But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant” (Mark 10:14)
 - Anger at the moneychangers: “And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple” (John 2:13–16)
 - Anger at death: “When Jesus saw her weeping... he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled” (John 11:33)
- *The anger of humans*
 - Cain (Gen 4)
 - “And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.’” (Gen 4:4b–7)
 - Cain’s anger resulted in the death of Abel.
 - Moses (Exod 32)
 - “Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. He took the calf

that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.” (Exod 32:19b–20)

- Saul and David (1 Sam 18+)
 - Saul’s madness calmed by music.
 - Saul’s anger abated by David’s kindness.
- David and Nabal/Abigail (1 Sam 25)
 - David’s anger was justified.
 - Abigail’s actions minimized the repercussions.
 - God brought justice to Nabal – had a heart attack and died.
- Naaman (2 Kings 5)
 - Naaman’s anger was brought on by pride.
 - Naaman’s servants calmed him down.
- *Two key passages*
 - “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.” (Eph 4:26–27)
 - “Be angry” may or may not be a command. At the very least, Paul is affirming that everyone gets angry at times.
 - If and when we do become angry, we must be careful that it does not result in sin.

- While as a general rule it is good to not go to bed angry, the instruction is to deal with your anger in a wise way as soon as possible.
- Letting anger linger is giving opportunity to the devil.
- “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (James 1:19–20)
 - Slowing down anger is a command found in four Proverbs: 14:29, 15:18, 16:32, 19:11.
 - Being quick to hear is the first step to slowing down anger.
 - Just because an angry thought comes into your mind does not mean it should automatically come out of your mouth.
 - Don’t be slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to get angry!
 - There are rare exceptions to verse 20.

SESSION 1 TAKE-AWAYS

1. Anger is an emotion God gave to all humans.
2. Anger is part of the *imago Dei* and as such, was intended to produce good.
3. The Bible says there are two kinds of anger: righteous and unrighteous.
4. God's anger is always righteous. Human anger is rarely righteous.
5. A dominant characteristic of God is that he is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
6. The dominant command in Scripture regarding anger is to slow it down.
7. The dominant warning in Scripture regarding anger is that sinful anger has the potential to be highly destructive, both to the angry person and to his/her relationships.

*“You can’t always make things better—
but you can always make them worse.”*

Eric Barker

Session 2: The Role of Anger in Relationships

ANGER AND ME

- How my anger affects me
 - Thoughts
 - Cognitive distortions in self-talk (see chart on next page)
 - Ask yourself
 - Are my thoughts revealing an idol?

Anger is a great idol-detector!
 - Are my thoughts self-focused or God-focused?
 - What would Jesus have me do with these thoughts? What would Satan have me do with these thoughts?
 - What is the goal of my thoughts?
 - Being right, control, domination, manipulation, intimidation, retribution, the glory of God
 - What is underneath my thoughts?
 - fear, hurt, frustration, other?

Cognitive Distortions That Fuel and Misdirect Anger	
<i>Personalizing:</i>	Without factual evidence, you believe that another person's statements or actions are directed toward you. You may feel personally attacked.
<i>Catastrophizing:</i>	You magnify or exaggerate the negative impact of another person's actions or an event well beyond the facts. You "awfulize" the situation.
<i>Forecasting:</i>	Without any basis in fact, you predict that a situation will turn out badly, without looking fairly at all the possible outcomes.
<i>Polarized thinking:</i>	Not focusing on all the positive and negative aspects of a situation or thing, you see it in extremes (e.g., success/failure, bad/good). You think in overgeneralized terms (e.g., always, never, any, every).
<i>Mind reading:</i>	Without asking, you assume you know how another person thinks or feels or what that person's motives are.
<i>Labeling:</i>	You use name calling or inflammatory descriptors (e.g., "incompetent," "zoo," "farce," "nightmare") to describe another person or situation.
<i>Filtering:</i>	You focus your thoughts on the most upsetting or threatening things that happened without looking at neutral and positive events that might belie your negative view.
<i>Thresholding:</i>	Setting an arbitrary limit for what you can stand or will tolerate, you feel justified in being more intense or punitive when another person "crosses the line."
<i>Blueprinting:</i>	You instruct yourself as to how you will act, often focusing on getting even or punishing another person.

from W. Robert Nay, *Taking Charge of Anger*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 120.

- Arousal
 - Heart rate and blood pressure go up
 - Breathing rate increases
 - Digestion slows to free up blood for brain and muscles
 - Muscles tighten (shoulders, neck, forehead, jaw, arms, legs)
 - Face flushes, hands get hot with anger or cold with fear
 - Senses are heightened
 - Adrenaline and cortisol are released into blood to trigger “fight-or-flight” response

The “TRAIL” of Anger

<u>0</u>	<u>Calm</u>
1 – 2	Tense
3 – 4	Rattled
5 – 6	Aggravated
7 – 8	Infuriated
9 – 10	Livid

- Behavior
 - Fight, flight, freeze
 - What was patterned for me in my family of origin?
 - What was godly? Ungodly?
 - What is my anger style? How's it working for me?
 - De-habituate, re-habituate

ANGER AT GOD

- It's not unusual to be angry at God.
 - Good theology takes us there.
 - God is omniscient, omnipotent, always benevolent, and active in the world.
 - “If God controls all things, and he either caused or allowed this bad thing to happen, so he is the one to blame. He could have stopped it but he didn't.”
 - “I prayed but it didn't do any good.”
 - Theodicy – the defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil.
- The Bible has numerous examples of people being angry at God.
 - Cain, when God had no regard for him and his offering. (Gen 4)

- David, when God struck Uzzah dead because he touched the ark.
(2 Sam 6:8)
- Jonah, when God had mercy on Nineveh. (Jonah 4)
- Anger at God cannot be righteous anger. Anger at God is based on the perception that God did something that wasn't perfect.
- God is patient with us when we are angry at him.
- It is okay to express your questions to God. It is not okay to accuse God or sit in judgment of his ways. Though Job did, he was rebuked for it, as was Jonah.
- Anger is a part of every loving relationship. Scripture does not condemn pouring out our complaints in lament to God. We must ultimately trust God—not just his answers to our questions. He doesn't owe us an explanation of his ways.

ANGER AT MYSELF

- It is good to be angry at yourself when
 - it motivates you to be more diligent in your fight against sin
 - it reveals where your idols are
 - it turns your heart toward God and away from the devil
- Ongoing anger towards oneself may reveal
 - an inability to accept God's forgiveness
 - an incomplete awareness of the depth of depravity
 - unrealistic expectations of personal success
 - an incorrect perspective of God and grace

ANGER AT HOME

- Anger is inevitable at home.
 - Husbands get angry at wives, wives at husbands, parents at children, children at parents.
 - The way anger was expressed in your family of origin is likely to be your default setting.
 - When you see anger, the following is probably true:

- Someone is being selfish. *Am I? What about?*
- Perceptions are usually different from reality. *What am I missing?*
- Anger suggests ungodly behavior. *How can I respond in a God-honoring way?*
- Anger demands justice. *Leave justice to God. Instead, choose kindness, compassion, and mercy.*

- Anger keeps the worst company.
 - “enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of *anger*, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy” (Gal 5:19–21)
 - “quarreling, jealousy, *anger*, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, disorder” (2 Cor 12:20)
 - “*anger*, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lying” (Col 3:8–9)
 - “bitterness, wrath, *anger*, clamor, slander, malice” (Eph 4:31)

- Anger and its companions may get into your house, but the longer they stay, the more destructive they become.

ANGER OUTSIDE THE HOME

- **Avoid** angry people when possible.
 - “Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his way and entangle yourself in a snare.” (Prov 22:24–25)
 - “A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.” (Prov 29:22)
- **Never** respond to anger with anger.
 - “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov 15:1)
- **Give** grace whenever possible.
 - “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Col 4:6)
- **Empathize**. You cannot see what is below the surface of their anger, so listen to them and respond to the fear, hurt, or frustration underneath.
 - “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.” (Heb 4:15a)
- **Repay** evil with good.
 - “Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.” (Rom 12:17)

HELPING OTHERS WITH THEIR ANGER

- Enter into their world, do your best to understand them, and give them gospel hope.
- Help them see their wrong beliefs and sinful motives that lead to anger and point them to the God of grace.
 - God is the only perfect and righteous judge, so leave the judging to him.
 - God is also merciful and forgives those who come to him in faith.
 - God is perfectly good, loving, and sovereign. You can trust him.
- Help them to see the need to de-habituate the wrong responses to anger and re-habituate godly responses to anger.

SESSION 2 TAKE-AWAYS

1. Anger affects my thoughts, arousal, and behavior. Awareness is crucial.
2. Anger at God is not unusual, but it is sinful. It implies God is imperfect in either his goodness or his power.
3. God is patient with those who are angry with him. He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
4. Anger at yourself can be of some benefit, but if the anger is ongoing, it is likely revealing theological struggles you may have with the grace of God.
5. The closer the relationship, the more likely anger is to occur. When it does, remember:
 - a. Someone is being selfish.
 - b. Someone's perception is skewed.
 - c. How anger is telling you to respond is likely to be ungodly.
 - d. Anger wants justice—which is best left up to God.
6. Remember the ANGER acrostic for dealing with anger outside the home:
 - a. Avoid angry people when possible.
 - b. Never respond to anger with anger.
 - c. Give grace whenever possible.
 - d. Empathize.
 - e. Repay evil with good.

“Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.”

Frederick Buechner

Session 3: Getting to the Heart of My Anger

Scenario 1: Sally and Jim

Sally and Jim are newlyweds. Jim grew up in a family where expressing anger outwardly and loudly was the norm. Sally grew up where anger was swept under the rug and never discussed. Jim is getting ready for work and opens his underwear drawer to discover that he has no clean t-shirts.

“Sally, where are my clean t-shirts?”

“Uh-oh. I was gonna wash them yesterday but when you took me out for breakfast, it threw off my day and I forgot all about them. Sorry.”

“Sorry? Is that it? I have to go to work, and I have no clean t-shirts. What am I supposed to do? Put on a dirty one?” Jim at this point is aggravated and his voice and body language definitely give it away.

Sally starts to cry. She runs to the laundry room, puts a few t-shirts on a light wash, and says, “I can have you a clean one in about 20 minutes. Will that be okay?” as she sniffs back tears.

“Nope. I’ll be late. Just hand me a dirty one,” he says tersely. Looking at Sally, he says, “This better not become a pattern.” She sheepishly shakes her head. Jim gets dressed and leaves without kissing her goodbye. Sally lays on the bed and cries.

OUTIES

- Jim is an “outie.” When an outie gets angry, he expresses it just like he sees it in the moment. He may sound higher on the anger scale (TRAIL) than he actually is, especially to an “inie.”
- An outie’s assumptions are often...
 - My perception is reality.
 - I have been wronged.
 - I deserve justice; at the very least, an apology.
 - Once I’ve been declared right, everything is back to normal (or maybe after a little punishment).

INIES

- Sally is an “inie.” When an inie gets angry, she stuffs it inside and tries to keep anger from expressing itself. Her level on the anger scale (TRAIL) is probably higher than it appears to others.
- An inie’s assumptions are often...
 - Anger is bad and conflict due to anger is bad. I should do everything I can to avoid it.
 - If I can make it go away, then everything is okay.
 - Peace is more important than justice. If I have to be seen as wrong, that’s okay.
 - There is less damage in leaving it unresolved than there is by going through the conflict.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Outies *strengths*
 - They are not afraid of expressing anger.
 - They have a strong desire for justice.
 - They tend to resolve anger quickly.
 - They tend not to invite anger's companions to the party.
- Outies *weaknesses*
 - They tend to be slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to get angry.
 - They tend to act on their thoughts (perceptions) before evaluating them.
 - They tend to lack empathy and understanding.
 - They are prone to attacking the person and not the problem.
- Inies *strengths*
 - They value controlling anger.
 - They have a strong desire for peace and unity.
 - They tend to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.
 - They are more likely to be empathetic and understanding.
- Inies *weaknesses*
 - They typically don't resolve anger. They ignore it till it goes off the radar.
 - They get angry with themselves for not being able to deal with anger.
 - Their unresolved anger builds inside them and eventually manifests itself.
 - By brooding over their anger, they invite anger's friends to the party.

Which one am I? _____

ANGER TRIGGERS

- Anger begins with a provocation (trigger).
 - “And they *provoked* the LORD to anger” (Judg 2:12)
 - “Fathers, do not *provoke* your children to anger” (Eph 6:4)
- What provokes our anger?
 - My six-year-old grandson, when asked how to keep his magical guinea pig from getting angry, replied: “It’s easy. You just give him what he wants when he wants it.”

The Five E’s of an Anger Event

- An **E**vent occurs.
- An **E**xpectation is unmet.
- An arousal is **E**voked.
- An **E**valuation occurs.
- A response is **E**xpressed.

- A closer look at the Five E’s
 - One exercises little control over the occurrence of the event.
 - Is your expectation realistic? Is it godly or selfish?
 - The event is not the trigger. The unmet expectation is.
 - Arousal will happen. You can learn to control how far it takes you.
 - If you skip the fourth E, you may kill the mosquito but destroy your home.

- Respond, don't react. Rely on step 4 to guide your step 5.
- Anger is a natural response to threat. When we feel that someone or something is threatening who we are, what we do, or what we value, we get angry.
 - Reneau Peurify says to ask yourself three questions:
 - Why am I angry?
 - What do I want?
 - How am I threatened?
- Unmet expectations
 - Expectations of ourselves
 - "I should be farther along in my Christian walk than I am."
 - "I should have more physical stamina or beauty."
 - "I should know more than I do."
 - "I should have achieved more in my life than I have."
 - Expectations of others
 - "They should be more respectable, gracious, and well-mannered."
 - "They should be more loving, caring, and compassionate."
 - "They should be less biased and more equitable."
 - "They should be more aware and considerate of others."
 - Expectations of things in the world
 - "My electronic/mechanical devices should work flawlessly 24/7."
 - "Road construction should not be scheduled on high-traffic days."

- “Government regulations should be simpler.”
- “It should never rain on days I plan to travel.”
- Expectations of God
 - “I am on his side. Why should he make things so difficult for me?”
 - “I prayed and prayed. Why didn’t he hear me?”
 - “Why is Joe blessed with so much more than me?”

- *When our reality falls short of our expectations, we should consider what we deserve.*

- We don’t want justice for ourselves. Why should we demand it for others?
- We never live up to God’s expectations of us. That’s the definition of sin.

How can we demand others meet our expectations?

UNDERNEATH YOUR ANGER

Anger Iceberg

Icebergs are large pieces of ice found floating in the open ocean. What you can see from the surface can be misleading. Most of the iceberg is hidden below the water.

This is how anger works. Often when we are angry, there are other emotions hidden under the surface.

Angry

embarrassed scared grief
shame tricked overwhelmed
frustrated depressed disgusted
distrustful grumpy stressed
attacked rejected helpless
guilt trapped nervous anxious
trauma annoyed exhausted envious
disrespected unsure offended
disappointed lonely worried insecure
uncomfortable regret hurt

The Gottman Institute

- Anger is rarely found without something else underneath it.
 - These sub-level emotions can be grouped as:
 - Hurt
 - Fear
 - Frustration
 - Determining the cause of the sub-level emotions is important for the development of a plan to control your anger.
 - This process may require the assistance of a professional counselor.
 - Sub-level emotions can be deep and complex, stemming from:
 - Abandonment
 - Abuse
 - Rejection
 - Betrayal
 - Lack of physical affection

“There’s only one person in the entire universe who knows how to meet our needs and heal our hurts. Only one person always fulfills the expectations he has for us. And when we’re feeling insecure and afraid, only one person sees all our inadequacies and imperfections and loves us still—just the way we are. That’s the glory of the cross. That’s the message of New Testament Christianity.”

from Chip Ingram, *Overcoming Emotions That Destroy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 121.

SESSION 3 TAKE-AWAYS

1. When it comes to anger style, people can be grouped into “outies” and “inies.”

Outies express anger visibly and vocally. Inies stuff anger inside and try to avoid outward expression. Both styles have strengths and weaknesses.
2. The Five E’s of an Anger Event are:
 - i. An **E**vent occurs.
 - ii. An **E**xpectation is unmet.
 - iii. An arousal is **E**voked.
 - iv. An **E**valuation occurs.
 - v. A response is **E**xpressed.
3. Anger is a natural response to threat. When we feel that someone or something is threatening who we are, what we do, or what we value, we get angry.
4. Anger is most often triggered by an unmet expectation.
5. When our reality falls short of our expectations, we should consider what we deserve.
6. Underneath most anger is some form of hurt, fear, or frustration.
7. Christ comes and meets us in our weaknesses with grace and redemption.

Cooling the Flames of Anger

“I wouldn’t have to manage my anger, if people could learn to manage their stupidity.”

“Behind every angry woman stands a man who has absolutely no idea what he did wrong.”

Anonymous

To be good and angry, a believer must learn to rebuke but not retaliate, to confront but not condemn, and to judge without being judgmental.

Session 4: Doing Anger Well

Scenario 2: Ralph and Rita (part 1)

Ralph and Rita come in for their first marriage counseling session. They have been married for 15 years and have 2 kids. Both have their boxing gloves on and are waiting for you to sound the bell. They can’t even agree on who gets to swing first. After listening to the jabs fly for 15 minutes, you blow the whistle and insist that they stop for a minute. You ask Ralph to speak calmly and describe what it is that he is so angry about.

“Here’s what happened. I had to work late last night, for the third time this week. We’ve got a big project going on and I’m the guy that has to review everyone else’s work at the end of the day. If I don’t give my approval, they can’t start on their work the next morning, so it’s not like I can blow it off and go home at 5:00. It was 7:30 and I was still in the thick of it, and she calls me and demands that I come home right away. I tried to get her to calm down and told her I’m doing my best to get out the door. After fuming a bit and saying a bunch of stuff that made no sense, she finally told me she had called Darlene, one of my co-workers, to see if I really was at work. Darlene told her she wasn’t sure but she thought she saw me leave with a bunch of guys that were headed to the corner bar about an hour ago.

“I blew up. She had no business calling my co-workers and embarrassing me like that. I’ve never been anything but truthful with her. I couldn’t believe she would accuse me of something like this. She told me she thought I was lying to her, and I told her she was crazy and hung up. I got home about 10:00 and we were both too upset to talk about it.”

For the next 10 minutes, divide into groups of 6 or less, and answer the following questions based on what Ralph has told us so far.

1. What was Ralph angry about?
2. What did Ralph want?
3. What did Ralph perceive was being threatened?
4. What expectations did Ralph have of Rita?
5. What was underneath Ralph's anger?
6. Do you think Ralph has demonstrated selfishness? If yes, how?
7. Do you think Ralph's perception is reality? If no, how so?
8. Do you at this point think Ralph's anger is justified?
9. Do you think Ralph's actions so far have been reasonable? appropriate? godly?

Scenario 2: Ralph and Rita (part 2)

Rita was then given a chance to respond. She was more than ready.

“Well, that’s mostly accurate. He just left out a rather important detail—like it was our anniversary. I had a sitter to come over at 7:00, dinner reservations at 8:00 at our favorite restaurant, and I was dressed to the nines. I knew he had a crazy week at work, but he assured me that morning as he left, that tonight would not be a problem... he would be home by 7:30 at the latest. Since I had not heard a peep from him all day—no text, nothin’—I started getting worried. So I called Darlene, ‘cause I figured she was working late with the rest of them and I didn’t have anyone else’s number.

She had left with a “headache” at 6:30 (I think she had a date)—but when she told me she thought she saw Ralph leave with the guys for the bar, I was livid! Last year he totally forgot our anniversary and we had a really big fight over it—one I didn’t think he’d want to repeat! Here I am thinking, “That louse! He’s done it again! Got caught up in work and decided to go unwind with the boys!” When I called, I just started yelling. He was so upset about the whole Darlene thing that he didn’t even apologize for forgetting we had a date. I had been excited about our plans for weeks, and then he goes and pulls a bone-head stunt like this. I’ve had it. You bet I’m mad!”

For the next 10 minutes, stay with your groups and answer the following questions based on what Rita told us.

1. What was Rita angry about?
2. What did Rita want?
3. What did Rita perceive was being threatened?
4. What expectations did Rita have of Ralph?

5. What was underneath Rita's anger?
6. Do you think Rita has demonstrated selfishness? If yes, how?
7. Do you think Rita's perception is reality? If no, how so?
8. Do you at this point think Rita's anger is justified?
9. Do you think Rita's actions so far have been reasonable? appropriate? godly?

Scenario 2: Ralph and Rita (part 3)

Ralph wanted an opportunity to speak again. His anger had cooled down somewhat.

"Yes, I did lose track of time. The pressure right now is pretty horrendous and it's hard for me to think about anything else. One of the guys turned in some really crappy work and I was ticked that I was having to clean up so much of his mess. When the phone rang, I immediately realized it was 7:30 and I was supposed to be going on a date with my wife. But when she lit into me with both guns blazing, my anger went through the roof. How am I supposed to control my anger under those circumstances?"

Defusing the Bomb (CALM)

- STEP 1: Cool down.
 - Anger past 6 on the TRAIL scale is moving swiftly towards detonation.
Take a time out and slow down your anger.
- STEP 2: Ask yourself some questions.
 - Why am I angry?
 - What do I want?
 - How am I threatened? Is the threat real? Is my anger level appropriate to the threat level?
- STEP 3: Listen for understanding and share your feelings.
 - What am I missing? (iceberg)
 - Do I understand what is important to my provoker?
 - “I feel _____ (underlying emotion)
when _____. (what happened)
I wish _____.” (what we hoped was different)
- STEP 4: Make restitution and a plan to move forward.
 - Acknowledge your faults.
 - Forgive.
 - Determine what your collective goal is.
 - Put steps in action to achieve that goal.

SESSION 4 TAKE-AWAYS

1. Where anger is involved, there is usually a mess to clean up.
2. Underlying circumstances (and corresponding emotions) factor into the magnitude of the anger response.
3. Sam Williams says, “We are often most dangerous when we are right.” Being right does not give us the right to behave badly.
4. Self-examination almost always reveals a sinful component of our anger responses.
5. When we have wronged another person, we must confess our sin to God and to that person and take the necessary steps to make restitution.
6. Forgiveness is not optional for the Christian.
7. The job is not over just because the anger subsides. Determine the desired outcome and don’t stop short of it.
8. After it’s over, let it go. Don’t ruminate on it. Don’t bring it up again. Don’t file it away for future use. Don’t beat yourself up over it. Leave it to God who is “slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”
9. Remember CALM
 - a. Cool down.
 - b. Ask yourself some questions.
 - c. Listen for understanding and share your feelings.
 - d. Make restitution and a plan to move forward.

*“Whoever restrains his words has knowledge,
and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.”*

Proverbs 17:27

Session 5: Tools for Cooling the Flames

MINIMIZE STRESS

(from Chip Ingram)

- Slow down the pace of life.
 - Why are we told to walk in the Spirit, rather than run?
 - “There is more to life than increasing its speed.” Orin Crain
- Reduce your expectations.
 - Write your “To Do” list, then cut it in half.
 - Delegate.
 - Say “no”.
- Admit your mistakes.
- Laugh more.
- Take care of yourself.
 - Sleep
 - Exercise
 - Eat healthy
 - Have fun
 - Minimize medication
- Recognize your anger triggers.

MAXIMIZE GOD

- Get right with God: believe in him, confess your sins, forgive others.
- Experience God's unconditional love and acceptance.
- Accept who God made you to be.
- Trust God and his sovereignty—acknowledge he is in control.
- Be a grace giver.
- Be a person of prayer.

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

Prov. 15:1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Prov. 12:18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Prov. 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

Prov. 25:28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Others...

SELF-SPEAK

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” (2 Cor 10:3–5)

- Anger tries to take control of your mind. Every increase on the anger scale increases the volume of anger’s voice speaking at you.
 - Recognize anger is escalating and cool down. Take deep breaths, go for a walk, slow down your anger.
 - Recognize anger rarely encourages you toward godliness. Ed Welch says anger “shows a temporary alignment with the devil himself.”
 - Speak truth to yourself.
 - “I am in control of my thoughts. I can choose to ignore my anger and let it go. I can choose to give anger complete control. And I can choose to trump anger’s thoughts with God’s thoughts. Anger holds no power over me, unless I give it power.”
 - “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph 4:31–5:2)
 - Think of Jesus at his trial and on the cross. He had every right to be angry, but instead he spoke scripture and words of comfort and forgiveness.

BE ASSERTIVE—NOT AGGRESSIVE

(from David Powlison)

Assertive

rebuke
reprove
admonish
exhort
confront
judge fairly
warn
talk directly
righteous indignation

Aggressive

attack
criticize
accuse
moralize
condemn
be judgmental
threaten
talk aggressively
self-righteous hostility

(from Les Carter)

Assertiveness

Even tone of voice
Respect constantly maintained
Succinct
Keeping other's needs in perspective
Open to alternatives
Guided by constructive motives
Responds to resistance with calm firmness

Aggressiveness

Pleading or coercion prioritized
Respect summarily disregarded
Can seem unending
Other's needs ignored
Rigid and demanding
Destructive in nature
Responds to resistance with harshness

- Peurifoy suggests the use of a D.E.R. script: *describe* the problem, *express* your thoughts/feelings, and *request* what you want.

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

(from Ken Sande)

- *The Seven A's of Confession*
 - Address everyone involved
 - Avoid if, but, and maybe (qualifiers)
 - Admit specifically
 - Apologize
 - Accept the consequences
 - Alter your behavior
 - Ask for forgiveness and allow time
 - Not all seven steps are needed all the time. Minor offenses can usually be settled more simply.
 - The seven A's are not supposed to be a ritualistic formula.
- *The Four Pledges of Forgiveness*
 - I will not think about this incident.
 - I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
 - I will not talk to others about this incident.
 - I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

USE AN ANGER LOG

(from Robert Nay)

DAILY ANGER LOG

TRIGGER/SITUATION (Where were you and what did others say or do?)

THOUGHTS (self-talk about your other, yourself, and why this happened)

FEELINGS (Are you anxious, guilty, angry, fearful? Be sure to record your physical sensations as well—e.g., stomach tight, face hot, shoulders tense—and place a number [1-100] on the intensity of your feelings)

ACTIONS (what you did or said in response)

OUTCOME (What personal or external outcomes occurred? How do you now feel about these outcomes?)

YOUR PLAN IF THIS HAPPENS AGAIN?

WHAT IS THE GOAL?

Psalm 131

A song of ascents. Of David.

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore.

Appendices

For further reading

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- Eifert, Georg H., Matthew McKay, and John P. Forsyth. *ACT on Life Not on Anger: The New Acceptance & Commitment Therapy Guide to Problem Anger*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2006.
- Ingram, Chip and Becca Johnson. *Overcoming Emotions That Destroy*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2009.
- Jones, Robert D. *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem*. Phillipsburg, PA: P&R, 2005.
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- Peterman, Gerald W. *Joy and Tears: The Emotional Life of the Christian*. Chicago: Moody, 2013.
- Peurifoy, Reneau Z. *Anger: Taming the Beast*. 2nd ed. Citrus Heights, CA: LifeSkills, 2016.
- Powlison, David. *Good & Angry: Redeeming Anger, Irritation, Complaining, and Bitterness*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016.
- Priolo, Lou. *The Heart of Anger: Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children*. Sand Springs, OK: Grace and Truth Books, 2015.

Sande, Ken with Tom Raabe. *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002.

Tafrate, Raymond Chip and Howard Kassinove. *Anger Management for Everyone: Seven Proven Ways to Control Anger and Live a Happier Life*. Atascadero, CA: Impact, 2009.

Wright, H. Norman. *Helping Your Kids Deal with Anger, Fear, and Sadness*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2005.

Helpful websites

<https://www.therapistaid.com>

<https://bcbenziger.com/biblical-studies-and-emotions-research/>

When is anger sinful? not sinful? (Wayne Mack)

When is anger sinful?

1. When it's for the wrong reasons (perceived "rights")
2. When we allow it to control us
3. When it becomes the dominant feature of our lives
4. When it involves brooding or fretting
5. When we keep a record of wrongs
6. When we pretend we are not angry
7. When we strike back verbally, passively, or physically
8. When we take it out on someone/something else

When is anger not sinful?

1. When we don't let it linger
2. When we control and restrain the expression of our anger
3. When we take time to examine our thinking
4. When we harness the energy created by our anger

Six Questions to Ask (Wayne Mack)

1. What is happening?
2. What does God think about what's happening?
3. What do I want/not want?
4. What am I tempted to do?
5. What scriptures support my thoughts/desires/actions?
6. Will I respond with "Thy will be done" or "my will be done"?

Anger Response Inventory (Chip Ingram)

Shut down	Spew out
Assert power and authority	Threaten others
Become pushy or aggressive	Become hostile and/or violent
Yell, scream, shout, slam	Blame others
Belittle (demean, slander)	Feel shame
Intimidate others	Manipulate others
Become depressed	Experience self-hatred
Isolate yourself	Cover up your feelings
Alienate others	Pretend you do not feel the way you do
Suppress your feelings	Rationalize and/or justify your actions or Feelings
Repress	Make excuses
Regress	Become discouraged, despondent
Become fearful	Gossip, slander
Grab, hit, push, beat, kick, slap, throw things	Become selfish and self-centered
Become defensive	Minimize how your anger affects others
Become prideful and arrogant	Deny your feelings
Become withdrawn	Feel self-pity
Become self-righteous	Become critical and cynical
Lie	Become sarcastic
Cuss	Give the “silent treatment”
Withhold affection	Whine
Put others down	Roll your eyes
Cry	Groan
Point your finger, or flip the middle finger	Give ultimatums
Frown	Shrug your shoulders
Shake your fist and/or head	Sneer

What’s Under the Hood (Ingram)

Hurt	Guilt	Resentment	Helplessness
Shame	Powerlessness	Envy, jealousy	Unmet expectations
Betrayal	Insecurity	Pride	Loneliness
Rejection	Dashed hopes and dreams	Low self-esteem	Pressured, stressed out
Feeling trapped	Hopelessness	Failure	Exhaustion, fatigue
Depression	Disappointment	Sense of worthlessness	Worry, anxiety

ABCD of Anger Management (Ingram)

- A – acknowledge the anger
- B – backtrack to the root reason
- C – consider the cause
- D – determine how to deal with the situation

Six Ways to Slow Down Your Anger (Ingram)

1. Communicate your needs in a nonaccusatory manner.
2. Try to understand and acknowledge the other person's point of view.
3. Stick to the issue and the facts (don't attack character).
4. Identify possible solutions (negotiate, compromise, cooperate, take turns, etc.).
5. Maintain calm, respect, and objectivity, and remain open to new input and/or ideas.
6. If the discussion becomes heated, consider taking a time-out.

8 QUESTIONS FOR DISMANTLING YOUR ANGER

(from David Powlison)

1. What is my situation?
2. How do I react?
3. What are my motives?
4. What are the consequences?
5. What is true?
6. How do I turn to God for help?
7. How could I respond constructively in this situation?
8. What are the consequences of faith and obedience?

Notes

