

Anger

Study #1

The following studies are designed for a discipler who is working with someone who may/has exhibited a problem with anger. The discipler can either give each study to the person beforehand so that they can prepare for each session or he can just use these studies with no preparation on the part of the disciplee. Either way, the discipler should only use these studies as a guide, looking to the Spirit to adjust these according to the person's need.

1. Ephesians 4:26

- A. According to v. 26 is it sinful to be angry?
- B. What is anger?

2. Ephesians 5:6

- A. Why do people get angry?
- B. Did Jesus ever get angry? (cf. John 2:14-27)
- C. What is the difference between God's anger and our anger?

3. I Corinthians 3:12-15, 4:5 Is God concerned with our actions only, or also with our motives behind the actions?

- A. What is usually the motive behind our anger? (cf. James 3:13-4:3)
- B. What is the motive behind God's anger? (cf. 2 Kings 22:15, 17; Ephesians 5:6)

4. We can see from the above that anger is not sinful, and even is called for on some occasions. Jay Adams likens anger to a warning signal on the dashboard of a car. Anger, an emotion, is merely an indicator that something is wrong. The person who is experiencing anger needs to stop and evaluate WHY is he/she angry. What is the cause/motive of this anger? The following diagram may help you get a view of anger:

CAUSE==>anger==>PRODUCT

The cause may be motivated by sin and the product may be sinful. But the anger itself is a neutral emotion.

- A. Can you name some occasions when Godly anger is appropriate?
- B. Most of our anger; however, is selfish and self-centered anger. Not Godly anger. Think of the last time you were angry. What motivated your anger? Have a time of repentance in light of the James passage of above, confessing your sinful motives (and any sinful actions!) to the Lord.
- C. Is there any restitution that you need to make with respect to those who felt your anger? (cf. Acts 26:20).

Study #2 The Fruit of Anger

The last study we looked at the cause or motive behind anger. This study will look at the product of anger.

1. Ephesians 4:25-32

- A. What are some of the destructive results of anger in this passage?

- B. Jay Adams has pointed out that these responses to anger can be divided into two general categories: Blowing up and Clamming up. Go through the list you developed in the last question and divide them up into these categories:
- Blowing up:
 - Clamming up:

One could also use Galatians 5:19-21 to add to the above list.

- C. What would be the result of continuing to walk in the flesh? (Galatians 5:13-17) by allowing selfish anger to control you? (Perhaps you have experienced some of this as the villain or the victim anger).
- D. With anger, whether the response is clamming up or blowing up, this usually leads to a downward spiral of increasing fragmented relationships. One person hurts the other and the other responds by hurting back (either by withdrawing or attacking). Have you seen this happen in any of your relationships?

2. Both clamming up and blowing up are equally destructive, but both are not as apparently destructive. Often we refer to the person who constantly blows up as one with Peacock pride, and the one clamming up as having turtle pride. But both sin as a result of pride. The peacock is just the more obvious villain, whereas the turtle often appears as the victim. But both contribute to the destructive breakdown of relationships.

- A. Which list more accurately describes you?
- B. How do you use your anger to get your own way?
- C. What does God think about this?

3. Review your common pattern of reacting when angry.

- A. Take this before the Lord in light of Ephesians 4:25-32.
- B. Ask the Lord for forgiveness.
- C. Then make any restitution necessary to those who have been injured/manipulated.

Study #3 Forgiveness

The world is populated with people who sin. Normally when someone sins against us they hurt us. As discussed in Study #2 we often react in one of two ways, we either "blow up" or "clam up". Neither of these responses is biblically appropriate. As a matter of fact as we respond in the flesh this leads to a spiraling fragmentation in relationships. If we are going to live in harmony with the others in God's Kingdom the first thing we need to learn how to do is forgive.

1. Read Colossians 3:12, 13

- A. What attitudes are to control our hearts?
- B. How does anger hinder this?
- C. How universal are the commands in vs. 13 to be forbearing and forgiving?

2. Read Matthew 7:1-5

- A. If we are going to help solve problems rather than make them worse, what do we need to do first?
- B. Certainly before we can objectively evaluate a situation the first step is forgiving the one who has sinned against us. Read Matthew 18:21-35.

1. What does it mean to forgive? (see verses 27-30)
2. Why should we forgive? (see vs. 33)
3. Have you drawn near to God to ask Him His position on your grievance?
4. Should we forgive even if the offender refuses to repent? Has God forgiven those sins of yours, which you have not repented of?
5. What are the consequences of not forgiving? (see also Mt. 6:12-15)

3. Forgiving does not mean that it stops there. It is just the beginning--getting the logs out of your own eyes. As we forgive those who have sinned against us, we will see more clearly our own sin and contribution to the problem as God reveals it to us. You may need to go to a wise older believer in order to get help "sorting logs". I Corinthians 6:1-6 allows for this. But when you go, you need to go to ask for help with YOUR logs. Be careful not to be critical of the other party lest you violate Matthew 18:15 (next study).

- A. Evaluate your relationships. Is there any need of forgiveness on your part?
- B. Have a time of prayer before the Lord to forgive those who have sinned against you. Sometimes it is good to symbolize this by writing down your grievances on a piece of paper and then burning it as you pray. As God points out your own sin, confess that as well.

Study #4 Dealing Appropriately with Anger

As we mentioned in the first study, anger is merely and indicator that there is a problem. This study will look at appropriate ways of dealing with anger. We started the last study with forgiveness. This study we will review proper ways of solving the problem that caused the anger.

1. One reason why we get angry is because we do not take appropriate steps at the appropriate times and the problem happens over and over again until we explode (this is clamming up until one blows up!). There are some good stories in the Bible, which show the severe consequences of this destructive passivity, especially if the clammer upper is in a position of authority, like a parent. Read I Samuel 2:22-33. Eli seems a good example of a passive father (clammer upper).

- A. What was true about Samuel's sons?
- B. What had he done about it? (cf. 3:13)
- C. How did God view this? (2:29)
- D. What was the result?
- E. Eli failed in discharging his responsibilities before the Lord in His home. The results were disastrous. Review your leadership in the home. Is there anything you need to repent of?

2. King Saul is a good example of a blower upper. King Saul had done several rash acts early in his kingship for which God had said that his son would not sit on his throne. Instead David was chosen by God to succeed Saul. Saul was not pleased with this and there was strife between David and Saul with David ultimately being driven into exile.

- A. Read I Samuel 18:10-16. This is just one occasion of an ongoing pattern of Saul's relationship with David. What was Saul's response to David's being blessed by God?
- B. What motivated his anger?
- C. How did he try to get his own way?
- D. Was he successful? What was the final outcome? (cf. I Samuel 31:1-6)

3. Obviously taking appropriate Godly action to solve problems is crucial to our relationships and us. Take a few moments to analyze a time when you were angry. This should be far enough in your past that you can clearly evaluate, but not so far back that you forget the particulars. Using this incident, analyze your anger with the following questions.

- A. What was the cause of my anger? (What was the particular event or incident?)
- B. What was the motive for my anger? Was it Godly? Was it selfish? There may be a bit of both, but which was more central?
- C. What was my response, that is, what did I do with my anger?
- D. What was the product of my anger? Did it solve the problem? Make it worse? Cover it over and hide it?
- E. Was there any passivity on your part that allowed the problem to get worse until you blew up? Is this an ongoing problem?

4. What kind of changes need to happen in your life to remedy the normal pattern that has been established in your life?

5. Was your response to the situation (in #3) about equal to the problem that caused it? If not the problem could be that underlying bitterness added to your response.

- A. Bitterness is anger that you have slept on. (cf. Ephesians 4:26, 31) How is bitterness described in Hebrews 12:15? Do you have a problem with bitterness?
- B. The antidote for bitterness is forgiveness. (cf. Ephesians 4:31, 32) Review the last study. But realize that excessive anger (greater than the problem that caused it) is usually a result of hidden bitterness. Once again, do you have any problem with bitterness?
- C. Bitterness can also arise from frustration for repeated offenses that are really a response to our passivity. A child that refuses to obey when a command is given is not really at fault if the parents sometimes expect obedience and at other times ignore the disobedience. Has this been a contributing factor? If so you need to confess your sins. (cf. James 4:17)

Have a time of prayer around this. Confess any sins of bitterness and unforgiveness. Next study will review a step-by-step way of analyzing a situation that angers us.

Study #5 Taking Appropriate Steps

1. Read Matthew 18:15-20.

- A. When we see someone sin what should we do about it? Why? What should motivate us?
- B. How will having already forgiven them and taken care of any bitterness in our life help in this motivation?
- C. Suppose they don't listen? What should we do then?
- D. Who should the confrontation benefit?
- E. What should our attitude be?

(Review the covenant of Forgiveness in the appendix.)

2. Now lets go back to a time when you were angry (last session). And analyze it including what steps should be taken.

- A. As clearly as possible analyze the original problem. Realize that your reaction to it and their reaction to your reaction could have muddied the water substantially and escalated the problem. So look at the original problem in God's light. (James 3:13-4:3 could be helpful here)
- B. Confess to God any contributing sin on your part in either your actions or motives.
- C. Go back to the person(s) involved and confess your sin to them. Make any necessary restitution. Often this solves the problem.
- D. If this does not solve the problem then revisit the problem with the logs now out of your eyes. It might help to get a wise person involved to help you see clearly. Develop a plan that will solve the problem. Do so in the light of God's word.
- E. Implement the plan by God's grace and help.

Study #6 Consequences

This last study will focus on the consequences of not dealing with anger appropriately.

1. Ephesians 4:26, 27

- A. What is the consequence of not dealing with anger in a timely manner?
- B. What are some ways the devil fans the flames of bitterness that lead to destruction?
- C. I Peter 5:6-10. How are we to resist the devil? Where does forgiveness fit in?

2. Genesis 4:1-8

- A. Why was Cain angry?
- B. What was the consequence of his anger, which he had harbored? (vs. 5, 6. The "fallen countenance" can be equivalent to depression)
- C. What did Cain need to do in order to escape his depression?

3. Let's unpack this a little further.

- A. What was the origin of Cain's anger? (vs. 4, 5)
- B. With whom was Cain really angry? Why?
- C. Cain was the first-born. (vs. 1, 2) Why might he have had a problem with going to Abel and procuring an animal for sacrifice?
- D. What would Cain have needed to repent of?
- E. What would have been appropriate restitution? (vs. 7)

4. Obviously there are severe consequences even internally for those who do not deal appropriately with anger.

- A. Are you experiencing any of these?
- B. What do you need to do about this? It may be helpful to approach a more mature believer who can help you evaluate what you need to do with this.

APPENDIX Covenant of Forgiveness

The covenant of forgiveness is necessary in a fallen world when conflict often leads to a constantly deteriorating cycle of destruction and fragmentation. The following summarizes the steps in dealing with such problems.

Forgiveness is a promise and thus falls under the category of a covenant. The covenant of forgiveness is practiced between two parties: a villain (the one causing the hurt through sin) and the victim (the one absorbing the pain). Forgiveness is a gracious act (it cannot be forced and is not owed) on the part of the victim toward the villain and is a threefold promise:

1. A promise the victim will not throw up the crime in the face of the villain in the future in order to gain some advantage.
2. A promise that the victim will not be talking about the crime to others and thus injure them. In this case the victim now becomes the villain and must exercise the villain's part.
3. A promise that the victim will not rehearse the incident over and over again in their mind thus "nursing the grudge". This perhaps is the most difficult thing to do for someone in this habit. However, a review of 2 Cor. 10:3-5 and Phil. 4:8 will show that this is possible although it may take some practice.

There are 3 steps to be prayerfully followed:

1. **CONFRONTATION:** The victim needs to approach the villain in love, having the logs removed from his own eye and seeking the good of the villain (Mt. 7:1-5). If the villain is in a position of authority over the victim (as in the case of children approaching parents) the victim needs to approach the person with an attitude of respect. (I Timothy 5:1-5)
2. **REPENTANCE:** The villain sees his sin from this revelatory experience and takes full responsibility for his crime. There is no place for blame shifting, or excusing his actions based on the sin of another. **THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR SIN!** We are responsible to act righteously and also **REACT** righteously (cf. Romans 12:17-21). The correct response for the villain is repentance toward God and confession toward the victim. The correct confession is "I was wrong for..." (not "I am sorry", although the villain may be).
3. **RECOURSE:** If the villain refuses the light, or excuses or justifies his actions, the victim needs to take the next steps in Mt. 18. He should seek out an objective brother to go with him.