

Anger and Contempt, Weapons of Mass Destruction

Overcoming Bad Passions—part 2

Matthew 5:21-26

July 13, 2014

DAY 1: Anger as bad as murder???

1. The rest of Matthew 5 is about overcoming six bad passions, all of them deadly.
2. Last week we saw how bad passions are easily fueled by things other than God's word. We follow our "eyes," how things "seem" to us, how we "feel," and "what we want." All of those fuel bad passions which torpedo the life of God flowing in and through us.
3. This week we'll look at overcoming the bad passions of anger and contempt.

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'"

4. When you read that verse, to what do you think Jesus is referring?

5. He is citing the sixth commandment. This is not a command against taking any life. He is referring to homicide or murder. This is patently clear when you consider the same section of scripture that gave us the Ten Commandments also gave us capital punishment and the concept of a "just war." The reason for prohibiting murder but allowing for capital punishment and a just war are the same—life is precious.

6. Mankind had "dumbed down" this command only to the deed of homicide. If they didn't kill someone, they thought they had obeyed this command. Jesus dropped the bombshell on them that "murder" is not just an action, but runs far deeper!

Matthew 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca" is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.

7. What thoughts run through your mind as you read this verse?

8. Jesus underscores three sins:

- a. "Angry with his brother"
- b. Saying "Raca" - this is a term of *ridicule*. Today, we'd say, "*You're NOTHING to me!*"
- c. Saying "You fool" - this is a slur against someone's reputation or name. It is a word of contempt, hurled!

9. Do any of the following examples make a connection between physical murder and relational murder or murder of the heart?

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|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Character assassination" | <input type="checkbox"/> Angry at an imaginary hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Being insulted, "dissed" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry at an unintended slight | <input type="checkbox"/> Angry at feeling neglected | <input type="checkbox"/> Murdering a marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destroying a person through our words, attitude or "look" | | <input type="checkbox"/> Murdering a friendship |

DAY 2: Anger's roots

James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

1. What does James point to as the cause of fights and quarrels? (4:1)
2. Does he say the anger that fuels fights and quarrels comes from the other person? Or an outside source? Or from within you?
3. To what does James point to specifically, that is within us that is the culprit for anger? (4:2)
4. James sees our anger (fights and quarrels) as fueled by our inner desires that either go unmet or are trampled on. He offers another way to have our needs met in 4:2. What is it?
5. When you think about God meeting human desires, what goes through your mind? Is that conceivable to you?
6. Think of a situation where you were angry. Unpack it:
 - a. What were the controlling thoughts in your head?
 - b. How did you try to justify your anger?
 - c. What desire(s) were either not met or trampled?
 - ___ You weren't appreciated like you thought you should have been.
 - ___ You felt slighted or neglected, as if you didn't "count."
 - ___ You felt belittled, or your idea(s) was belittled.
 - ___ Someone didn't treat you like you thought you deserved to be treated.
 - ___ You were not treated with the respect you thought you were due.
 - ___ You felt ignored, or like a "nobody."
 - ___ Your needs seemed to be considered unimportant, or even frivolous.
 - ___ Other: _____
7. What strikes you *now* about your anger?
8. What resonates with you from James 4:1-2?
9. What resonates most with you from question 6c?

DAY 3: The seriousness of taking anger seriously

Matthew 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca" is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.

1. In this verse Jesus points to three punishments for anger/contempt/insults, etc. What are they?

2. The first is "judgment."

Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

3. Secular man hates the idea of a "God of judgment," but judgment is nothing more than an honest reckoning, an honest accounting for our actions, behavior and our life. Our daily lives are filled with examples of the threat of judgment for wrongdoing.

a. What do you do when you're speeding and suddenly spot a police car on the side of the road?

b. If you're goofing off at work, surfing the internet, and the boss walks in your office, what do you do?

c. If you're on the phone with someone you shouldn't be talking to, and your spouse walks in, what do you do?

d. Conversely, when someone speeds by you and they are NOT caught, what do you mutter to yourself?

3. Your answers demonstrate the moral framework of the world in which we live. We are *expected* to do what is right, and when we don't, we *intuitively* "know" that either we shouldn't do what we're doing, or at least we don't want to pay the consequences.

4. Go back and read Matt. 5:22.

a. Did Jesus believe in the reality of hell?

b. Did Jesus seem to think that God would be unjust to people if that's where they ended up?

c. Jesus gave the people a strong warning. A warning is meant to stop us in our tracks and consider the consequences of our actions, to take them more seriously than we have before.

d. What strikes you about Jesus' words about hell?

5. As long as we see anger as "not that big a deal," we won't be motivated "to do *something* about it!"

6. Talk to God about today's study.

DAY 4: Repairing anger's damage- part 1

1. Once our anger is out, how do we repair the damage we've done?

*Matt. 5:23 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] **leave** your gift there in front of the altar. **First go** and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

2. Worship is considered the most important thing we do. To "worship" is to attribute the worth of someone to them.

3. But, according to Jesus there is one thing more important than worship! He stated it in our verses for today. What is that more important thing?

4. Instead of humbling ourselves, and going to someone we've blasted with anger, humans try all kinds of "counter-measures" in the hopes of making things right. Check any of the following you have tried:

___ Ignore it and hope the person forgets

___ Ignore it and hope the person didn't notice

___ Ignore it and hope the person forgave you

___ Ignore it and try harder, be loving

___ "Explain" your anger in the hopes that the person will not think too poorly of you.

___ Try to justify your anger by the other person's words or attitudes toward you

___ Other: _____

5. What has been your experience with trying some of the actions in question #4?

6. Conflict in this world is inevitable. The silver lining is this: relationships are meant to *deepen through* conflict. How we handle the aftermath of our anger begins the healing and deepening process!

7. Instead, we usually hesitate, procrastinate, and ruminate.

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble and defile many.

8. Bitterness starts out like a tiny seed. When we recall what has been done to us, we water the seed. When we tell others what was done to us we fertilize the seed. When we complain, murmur, and grumble, what was once a tiny seed has not only germinated but become a bitter tree. What two things does the writer of Hebrews say happens when we let bitterness fester?

9. Reconciliation requires humility, which is the antidote to anger. Do you need to exercise some humility?

DAY 5: Repairing anger's damage--part 2

Matt. 5:25 Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. [26] I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

1. Jesus uses another example from daily life to point us toward reconciling with people, where anger has "won the day."

2. What is the setting of today's two verses?

3. What action does Jesus recommend to us?

4. Jesus says we are to settle things "quickly." In yesterday's verse Jesus told us to "first go..."

Why do you think Jesus makes a big deal about speed and haste?

5. "Anger" can get a "life of its own." It is like a living creature inside of us. It can start as something very small, but over years can grow to "monster" proportions. What kinds of things have you seen in people you know where anger "got a foothold" in their life?

___ Harsh

___ Demeaning

___ Belittling

___ A sharp tongue

___ Critical nature; never good enough; almost impossible to please

___ Childish temper tantrums (in adult bodies)

___ Rage

___ Out of control fits

___ Beginning of violence

6. We've almost come full-circle from DAY 1. We began with Jesus equating anger with murder. Anger, if not dealt with can grow inside us into those kinds of behaviors, and that kind of heart.

7. Jesus would say to us, "Immediate action is imperative."

Ephes. 4:26 In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry...

8. Anger is the natural result of *misplaced dependence*.

9. If I am really, really, really depending on how my spouse, kids, boss, parents, etc. treat me, I've *set myself up* for anger. It's only the continuing pattern of depending on God for my deepest needs that makes progress against anger.