

## What Would Jesus Do About Anger

### Matthew 5

Somebody tell me your favorite fast car. New or old but has to be fast. Okay, let's use that car for our illustration. And you are the driver. You open the door and slide into the driver's seat. You smell that? That's the smell of excitement. You push the clutch pedal and make sure it's in neutral. Then you twist the key in the ignition and the engine roars to life. The whole car is shaking. The exhaust is deafening. Even worse when you blip the throttle and the whole car just comes to life with a shake.

You ease it into first gear and crawl slowly to the starting line, letting it warm up. Then push the clutch in, rev it up, rev it up, rev it up and then dump that clutch! Whoo! The g-force sets you back in the seat. The tires squeal for mercy. You hang on to the wheel with a death grip with your left hand and then shift into second. The tires chirp again. Wow! This is fun! It's pulling hard. Bang, third gear! What an amazing feeling. Your head is pinned to the head rest. You couldn't touch the dash with your hand if you tried. It's pulling hard. Bang, fourth gear and your peripheral vision is just a blur! All your senses are on overload. The noise, the smell, the feeling in your stomach; man, this is incredible!

Then you hit the finish line and go to hit the brakes...but nothing happens. You pump the brake pedal but there's nothing. No emergency brake. Nothing. There's a wall. AAHH! Crash. Burn. Over.

I tell you all that because that is a perfect description of anger. It's so easy and it feels like the right thing to do and it feels good when you are doing it. When you get mad and just put somebody in their place with just the right amount of sarcasm and harsh words, that's a rush. Throw in some profanity and it sometimes just feels right. They deserved it. You dispensed it. All is right with the world. And then you realize that the brakes are gone. Nothing. No pedal. No emergency brake...and it's too late. Crash and burn.

You lose your job, your marriage, your friends, your witness, and most certainly your right-standing with God and was it worth it? Jesus says there is no difference in that and murder. Let's look at what He said a little closer because anger affects us, it affects our relationship with God and it affects others.

Now, before we see what Jesus said, I'm going to say that there are three different types of people that are hearing this right now. The **first type** of person is the one who knows they have anger issues but are not really interested in changing. You believe that God made you this way and if people don't want you getting mad at them then they shouldn't do stupid stuff.

A lady once came to the old preacher Billy Sunday and tried to rationalize her angry outbursts. *"There's nothing wrong with losing my temper,"* she said. *"I blow up, and then it's all over."* *"So does a shotgun,"* Sunday replied, *"and look at the damage it leaves behind!"*

The **second kind** of person thinks that since they never really blow up at somebody in anger that they don't have a problem. But maybe your anger issues manifest themselves differently. Maybe you have unforgiveness in your heart toward someone or maybe you have bitterness or discouragement or trust issues. Anger can manifest itself in all kinds of ways.

But I hope you are the **third kind** of person. The third person may or may not have an anger issue but knows that it can be a huge problem in anybody's life including their own and so they will listen prayerfully with a heart open to change. Because it is a heart issue. That's the point Jesus was trying to make in this whole section of the Sermon

on the Mount. Every religion, in fact, every culture, regardless of religion has laws against murder but being a disciple of Jesus means not even getting angry...right? Or does it?

Let's read **Matthew chapter 5, verses 21-26** and we will see what Jesus would do about anger.

*"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'<sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.*

*<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

*<sup>25</sup> "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*

When you go back and look at the life of Jesus, there was more than once that Jesus got angry and I think some of us need to get angrier at what angers God. You have heard it said that God hates sin but loves the sinner. He also gets angry. **Romans 1:18** says, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."*

Do you know what ought to make us angry? Look, I'm not going to tell you who to vote for and I'm not going to make this overly political but the Democrat party is a perfect example. Every one of them, from Congress to Senate to president is all for abortion and gay marriage. Think however you want to about the border crisis and what we should do with Iran and whether the women's soccer team should be invited to the White House. And, yes, I know the Republican party and those candidates are not much better but God will give our president wisdom about such things IF he is right with God and no president can be right with God who advocates for abortion and gay marriage. Those are biblical issues and it should make you mad that those things are even being debated. If you have a problem with me saying that, then please meet me after the service and **bring your Bible**.

So, God gets angry at the wickedness in people, and He opposes that wickedness in an effort to turn them from evil, that they may find true life and freedom in Him. But even in His anger, God's motivation is love for people; to restore the relationship that sin destroyed. That might be a good litmus test to decide if your anger is justified or not. Are you angry at the sin and wish to bring the person into a right relationship with God...or are you just mad at the person?

Anger at a person affects us and our relationship with God. Anger at a person puts a barrier between us and God, not to mention that person. Jesus said just calling them names is the same as murder. That word **"raca"** in **verse 22** can't really be translated perfectly into English but basically it means something like "empty-headed" or "stupid" and it is slandering a person made in God's image and therefore like slandering God Himself.

Even worse is to call someone a **"fool"** as it says at the end of **verse 22**. It means to be stupid and godless. It's bad to be angry, worse to give vent to that anger and call them names. It is even worse to condemn a person's character by calling him a fool. All those things make anger affect us and our relationship with God.

In **verse 23**, Jesus changes the emphasis from our anger to someone else's anger and we see how that affects our worship. Did you know that your relationship to other people affects your worship? The Pharisees were all about

doing worship right. They spent a lot of time offering sacrifices, saying big, loud, long prayers and making sure everybody saw when they tithed but it was all heartless, external ceremony.

They knew that sin put a barrier between them and God so they would offer a sacrifice of some kind of animal on the altar and walk off feeling clean as a daisy without ever having repented and they thought they were very righteous by doing it. They sure didn't care if they offended somebody. What's that have to do with worship?

You may have noticed, like several of us have, that there has just been something different, better and more powerful in our worship times lately and I have some guesses as to why that seems to be. It could be that I'm such an awesome speaker. It could be. But since it has more to do than just with the sermon, I don't think that's it. Which also leaves out how handsome I am or just how humble I am. I think we can rule all that out as well. In fact, imagine that, I don't think it has anything to do with me at all.

My serious theory is that we have started to spend a little more time together and we are getting closer to each other and God has given us great unity and when people that love each other get together to worship the God they love, it's just an amazing time. Just like when a married couple start to get closer to God, they get closer to each other. So, just be ready. Be expecting Satan to try to do something to put a wedge between us because he knows that when people are angry with each other, true worship is almost impossible.

We tithe and we sacrifice our time and energy in our worship times together and we should. But do you know what God wants more than sacrifice? He wants us to have healthy relationships with Him and other people. There is no place for anger in the church even if it's not your fault. Jesus is saying in **verses 23 and 24** that even if it's not your fault and you didn't do anything wrong but you remember that somebody has something against you, then you should solve that the best that you can immediately.

**Romans 12:18** says, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."* You can't change some peoples' minds about you, but you can do your best to reconcile that relationship and if you can, then you have brought glory to God. Now go worship and thank Him. Because anger affects us and our relationship with God and it affects others, as well.

Jesus goes on in **verses 25 and 26** to talk about a similar circumstance. Somebody has a grievance against us and it is important to do our best to reconcile immediately. One situation was in church and the other is in court but the basic lesson is the same. If somebody has something against you, you need to fix it NOW!

In the very act of worship, if we remember the grievance, we are to break off our worship and make it right. Also, in the very act of going to court, if there is a grievance, we need to settle it right away. Don't let that disagreement, even if it's not your fault, remain because it will do nothing but get bigger. That person will be all over town, *"Did you hear what that sorry dog did to me? And he calls himself a Christian!"*

So, what has happened? Your good name is ruined. Your witness, which is God's good name, is ruined. And that person can't worship or witness either and they are telling everybody they know about it. How many people have to suffer because you have something against somebody or somebody has something against you? Jesus is saying that it doesn't matter whose fault it is. Fix it! And if you don't then it is sin.

Now, when I say that, it brings up something that needs to be addressed. Jesus is telling us, as His disciples, how to live in a way that is blessed by God. You want to be blessed by God, right? The opposite is to be punished by God and we obviously don't want that. So, here's what we need to know as it pertains to this passage in Jesus' sermon and quite a few others as well. When Jesus says something is sin, think about this: (pick up glass marked "Arsenic XXX")

Anybody want a sip? Oh, come on. Just a little sip. It tastes like lemon-aid. I know the label says arsenic but just a little won't hurt you. C'mon. Why not? I'll tell you what. Just a little will be fun but before it starts to do any real damage, I promise to take you to the emergency room. Fair enough? What's wrong? You don't want any poison in your body, do you? Just a little bit is too much. Then why would you allow any sin in your life?

Do you know what arsenic does? As soon as arsenic goes into your body, it starts to eat away at the tissue. It starts to do damage right away. The good news is that if you get to the emergency room right away, you'll probably survive. But the damage has been done and it is usually irreversible.

Sin is very similar. Every sin – every “little sin” or “big sin” causes damage. **Proverbs 11:21** says that the wicked will not go unpunished and some of you are thinking that you aren't wicked. It's just a little sin. This whole Sermon on the Mount was preached by Jesus to refute that kind of thinking. All sin is wicked, even what we consider to be small sins. We know we can ask God for forgiveness and we fall back on **1 John 1:9** that says if we confess our sins that He is faithful to forgive them. And that's true but there is damage that has been done.

There is damage to our relationship with God, first and foremost. Every sin is a nail holding Jesus to the cross driven through flesh and bone and into wood by our hard hearts. Do you expect the Father to just say, “*Well, boys will be boys*”? Or “*It's not that bad. It's not that big of a nail.*”

Every sin. Whether Jesus is talking about anger or calling someone a name or using coarse language or disrespect as He does in this passage or, as He says in upcoming passages, when He talks about lust or divorce, all sin causes damage. It damages us, it damages our relationship with God and with other people. It damages our worship and our witness.

Yes, thank you, Lord, for your forgiveness but I pray right now, God, that you will give us the strength to overcome in Your name. God, I ask for that forgiveness right now for myself and this church. Forgive us for allowing what we consider to be little sins to continue in our lives. Lord, search us and try us and see if there are any wicked ways in us and then convict us of those sins so we don't ever do them again. God, we appreciate the way that you have given us unity and have blessed us with your Spirit in this place. We want more of that. Please continue to show us your will and give us the strength to follow it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

If you would like to know for sure that you will go to Heaven when you die then you need to decide right now to ask Jesus to be Lord of your life and to come into your life to change it and be in control. Ask Him for forgiveness of your sins and then repent or turn away from those sins and He will forgive you. This allows you to have a relationship with our risen Lord, King Jesus, and that brings peace and joy in this life even in the difficult times. We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23) and what we deserve for that sin is eternal death in Hell (Rom. 6:23) but God the Father sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay the price for that sin (John 3:16) and all we have to do is believe. Do that right now.