

6-SESSION
BIBLE STUDY

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE

Session 3: Member's Guide

DISTINCT

LIVING ABOVE THE NORM



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SESSION 3

DISTINCT IN MY APPROACH TO CONFLICT

QUESTION #1

When have you regretted settling for a quick fix?

THE POINT

Take the lead in resolving conflict.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Imagine coming onto the scene of an auto accident. Two cars so twisted around each other, you think to yourself, There's no way anyone survived this.

But then you see someone sitting in the back of the ambulance. He's alive, but you can tell something is terribly wrong. He winces in pain every time he moves. The last thing you'd expect the paramedic to do is place a Band-Aid on the man's elbow, slap him on the back, and say, "You're good to go, buddy."

What?!

Just because you don't see an injury on the surface doesn't mean something critical isn't going on deep inside. In other words, you don't put a Band-Aid on internal hemorrhaging.

As Jesus continued to teach through His Sermon on the Mount, He came to the subject of anger. But anger isn't just a surface issue. Like everything else in Jesus' sermon, anger is a matter of the heart.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Matthew 5:21-26

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Fool!’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You moron!’ will be subject to hellfire.²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison.²⁶ I assure you: You will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny!”

Fool (v. 22)—This word comes from the Aramaic term *rhaka* [RAH kuh]. This insult refers to an idiot or empty-headed person, meaning someone mentally inept.

Moron (v 22)—This word derives from the Greek term *moros*, and is primarily translated as “fool” or some variation or related form of that word.

QUESTION #2

What’s your initial reaction to these verses?



Matthew 5:21-22

Does verse 22 make you uncomfortable? Me too.

Jesus took a law the people knew well and expanded it to a different level. The original commandment was a prohibition against taking someone's life (see Ex. 20:13). That's easy enough to grasp. But Jesus wasn't content to settle for the physical act of murder; the deeper issue is the anger we feel in our hearts. Furthermore, Jesus helps us see that anger isn't something that happens to us; it's a choice we make. We might not be able to control the circumstances around us, but it's ultimately our choice whether or not we respond to those circumstances with anger.

It's not always wrong to be angry. At times Jesus Himself became righteously angry. For example, He became angry when the religious leaders failed to show compassion for a man with a withered hand (see Mark 3:1-5). Later, Jesus became so enraged at the mistreatment of people seeking to worship that He turned over the money changers' tables and ran them out of His Father's house (see John 2:13-16).

A certain kind of anger is good, right, and justified. We feel that righteous anger when we see injustice in the world. Whenever we feel righteous indignation because others are mistreated, we aren't only justified in our anger; we are good and right in doing something constructive with that anger.

But that assumes that our hearts are aligned with God's heart. Most of the time, though, that's not the case. We get angry at the slow-moving traffic or the child who has to be told to clean up his toys for the thousandth time. This isn't righteous anger.

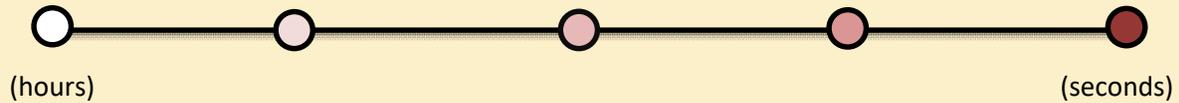
Let me ask the really hard question: Why do we get angry?

If we push past the circumstances, we'll discover the true reason we get angry is because we feel our rights have been violated. I should be treated better. I deserve more. The truth is, our anger stems from a deeply held sense of entitlement that, when crossed, makes us really, really mad. In other words, our anger is a reflection of our commitment to ourselves

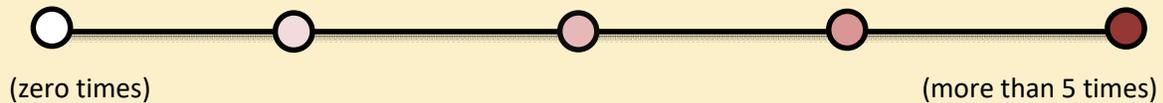
PERSONAL ASSESSMENT: ANGER

Do you have an anger problem? Use the following assessments to evaluate how quickly, and how completely, you give in to anger.

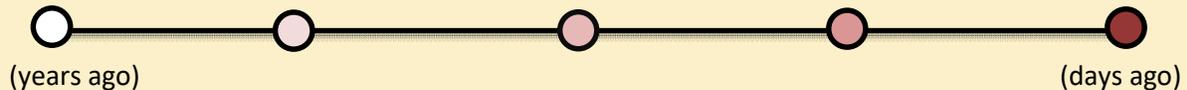
How long does it take you to feel angry during difficult or offensive situation?



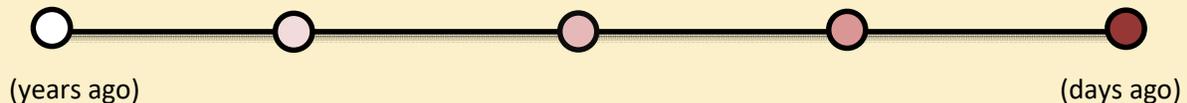
How often in a typical month do you feel something close to rage?



When was the last time you deeply regretted actions taken or words spoken in anger?



When was the last time a close friend or family member confessed to feeling afraid of you?



“There is nothing that can be done with anger that cannot be done better without it”

~DALLAS WILLARD~

Matthew 5:23-24

“I’m sorry.” Those are painful words. They’re so painful, in fact, we often qualify them by adding one more little word that changes everything: “I’m sorry, but”

That’s not being sorry. That’s choosing the road of self-justification. We say this when we want the other person to know that, even though we lashed out in anger or did something wrong, we had a justified reason for our behavior.

Anger often leads to conflict. Conflict often leads to relationships being strained to the breaking point—and beyond. It’s in those moments that we need to remember Jesus’ amazing statement from verse 24: reconciliation takes priority over worship. That’s serious.

Even more, we are to be proactive in resolving conflict. We should take the first step, even when we aren’t to blame for the conflict in the first place. How can we do that?

1. **Honesty.** Be willing to hear—and tell—the truth. Don’t be tempted to treat this like an airing of dirty laundry. The truth is useful for healing, but it’s not intended to be used as a hammer to beat the other person over the head.

QUESTION #3

Reconciliation requires honesty, humility, and security. Which of these do you find challenging?

2. **Humility.** In most conflicts, both sides have things they need to acknowledge and apologize for. In order to do so, you must have a humble heart. Humility will help you forgive with the same grace and mercy God forgave you.
3. **Security.** Security doesn’t mean arrogance. It means knowing you are a child of God. When you are secure and confident in your relationship with Jesus, you can apologize. How the person responds to your apology or attempt to reconcile cannot change your secure relationship in Christ.

QUESTION #4

What are some concrete principles Jesus established in this passage?

Matthew 5:25-26

Jesus commanded us not to put off reconciliation; instead, we are to settle and resolve differences quickly. We see at least two reasons why resolution demands this degree of urgency:

- **Earlier is easier.** The earlier individuals can face and discuss their differences, the easier it will be to reach a resolution. Problems between people don't get better with time; they get worse.
- **Unity is important.** Resolution demands urgency because unity is vitally important among God's people. Just before He was arrested, Jesus prayed for all His followers, past and present. One of the resounding themes in this high priestly prayer was unity (see John 17).

Think about that for a minute. Jesus was only hours away from His death, praying to His Father, and unity in the church was on His mind. Why might that be?

The unity of God's people provides proof of the gospel. In the church, you find people of all different nationalities, races, backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels. All these people come together under the banner of Jesus Christ. No other organization can unite people who are so completely different.

When we let our differences fester and divide us, the rest of the world questions the effectiveness of the gospel. But the unity of the church points to the power of the gospel.

QUESTION #5

What are the consequences of allowing a conflict to fester?

LIVE IT OUT

Anger is an issue of the heart. Consider the following suggestions as you work to bring your anger under the rule of Jesus in the days to come:

- **Take control of your anger.** You know what situations are likely to make you angry this week. Prepare your heart and mind to respond appropriately before you ever step into that situation.
- **Say you're sorry.** Look for a chance to say "I'm sorry" this week without qualification. Humble yourself before Christ and the other person, and say those two words that can bring healing.
- **Seek reconciliation.** Examine your relationships, past and present. Is there someone you still need to reconcile with? If so, don't wait any longer. Seek to honor Christ through the process of reconciliation.

Anger is a big deal in today's world, which is why I pray you'll let the words of Jesus sink into your heart. Don't put a Band-Aid on internal hemorrhaging. Look deeper to find the real source of your anger, and then reset the fracture so that you can heal.

My thoughts