

# Why Are You Angry?

by Israel Wayne

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*The sermon explores the root causes of anger and conflict, and provides practical guidance on how to overcome envy and selfish ambition, and resolve relational conflicts.*

**Duration:** 1:04:07

**Scripture:** Proverbs 12:16, Proverbs 14:17, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 16:32, Proverbs 19:11, Ecclesiastes 7:9, John 15:5, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:26-28

**Topics:** "Anger Management", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

This sermon by Israel Wayne focuses on the topic of anger, exploring the biblical perspective on anger, its roots, and the importance of self-control. Wayne delves into the dangers of anger, the need for introspection, and the significance of abiding in Christ to overcome the fleshly manifestations of anger. He emphasizes the role of spending time with Jesus daily, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform hearts and minds, leading to a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

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## Transcript

We place a very high priority on the discipleship of our kids. This morning, we have a very special guest with us, his name is Israel Wayne, and he is an active member at Calvary Chapel Sunset Coast in Benton Harbor, Michigan, right? Benton Harbor, Michigan. He's also an author of several books.

You'll find many of them there, Homeschooling from a Biblical Worldview, Full-Time Parenting, a Guide to Family-Based Discipleship, Questions God Asks, and Questions Jesus Asks. Be sure once you, you might want to write this down, be sure once you get home today to visit [familyrenewal.org](http://familyrenewal.org) and take a look around. There's lots of really great information there, and it's a great pleasure that I get to present to you Mr. Wayne, so come on up.

Good morning. Well, it's a blessing and an honor to be able to worship with you this morning, and it was really evident to me, even if I closed my eyes and didn't know where I was, very evident that I'm not teaching in Canada this week, as I was recently, whenever part of the morning announcements include a handgun competition, I know I am in Alabama. Glad to be here.

Well, I'm going to be sharing with you this morning from one of the chapters in my book, Questions God Asks, and I'll just give you a little bit of a background on this book. Probably about eight or nine years ago, I was reading through the Old Testament, studying through the Old Testament, and I started to notice a

recurring theme that really intrigued me, and that was all the way through the Old Testament, God asked questions, and I thought that was really unique, because one of the doctrines that we know to be true of God is that God is omniscient, God knows all things, and yet I noticed that God asked questions like, he asked, Abraham, where is your wife, Sarah, and he asked Elijah in the cave, what are you doing here, and he asked Moses, what's in your hand, and he asked Balaam, who are these men with you, and on and on and on, lots of questions. He asked Jonah, do you have a right to be angry, and so on.

So, I started to ask myself why these questions would be in the Bible, if God already knew the answer, as he does, he knows the answer to every conceivable question before it's even asked, why would these questions be in the Bible? So if they're not there for God's benefit, then who are they for? Well, obviously for the person who's being questioned, but what is it that God wants these individuals, these people to think about, and to consider, what types of assumptions or biases do they have that he wants to challenge them to consider? So I'm going to be talking about one of those chapters here, it's a question that God asked Cain, and then that book came out last year, this book is the sequel, which is a study on the Gospels, and it's called Questions Jesus Asked, because Jesus was a master at asking questions as well. So many questions, and in fact, I love how Jesus would answer questions with questions. Someone would ask him, good teacher, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? And instead of answering the question, he would say, why do you call me good? And he would penetrate to their assumptions and their presuppositions.

And so, the question that I'm going to deal with this morning is a question that's found in Genesis chapter 4, you're welcome to turn in your Bibles and read along with me here, in Genesis 4, I'm going to be reading from the ESV, the English Standard Version. Now Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord. And again, she bore his brother Abel.

Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. 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. And 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.

So the question here is, why are you angry? I want to deal with the topic of anger. Let's just take a minute and pray before we dive into the rest of this passage. Heavenly Father, I just ask you to help me to be able to communicate what's on your heart, to speak what is true, to be able to share the truth that you have included in your word, to help us to understand and to be able to overcome the sin of anger in our own life.

Lord, we just commit to not just be hearers of your word, but to be doers and to put it into practice as well. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Okay, so this is also Father's Day weekend, and so it's interesting that we would have a message on anger on Father's Day weekend, but you know the scripture actually ties these two concepts together in Ephesians 6-4. And it says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath or to anger, but instead train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I'm a father of eight children, soon to be nine, coming up in Christmas, and so I have a lot of experience with parenting.

My book is called Full-Time Parenting, and yes, it is autobiographical. Two of my sons are with me. Benjamin, who just had his birthday this weekend, turned 15, he's with me, and my son Isaac is 11, he's here with me, and my sister Soni, who works full-time with us in our ministry family renewal.

And as a parent, those of you who have raised children, you know that sometimes it's a real challenge as a parent not to give in to frustration, not to give in to anger as it relates to teaching and training and discipling our children. And for those of you who are children or youth, you know the same thing in relating to your parents, that there's this sense of frustration and there's this sense of difficulty. There is, in theology, a discipline on how to study the Bible.

It's a big word, it's called hermeneutics. And it is the study of people named Herman. No, it's not actually, it's not that at all.

Hermeneutics is how you study and understand the Bible in its proper context. It's the discipline of understanding how the scripture works, that there's different types of genres, that you can't read all books of the Bible the same way, there's differences. Well, one of the rules or one of the laws or principles of hermeneutics is called the law of first mention.

The law of first mention. And this concept teaches that if you want to understand an idea or you want to understand a concept, look at the first place, the first instance that it's used in the scripture. Because many times you will find that in that first instance, it lays a kind of template, it lays a sort of groundwork or foundation for understanding the following and preceding passages.

I don't have time to do a whole teaching on hermeneutics here, but just one thing that comes to mind is, for example, in the Bible, the concept of love. Love, when it is first spoken of in the Bible, it's not spoken of a love between a man and a wife, interestingly. It's spoken of a love between a father and a son.

It talks about how Abraham loved Isaac. And so the Bible uses that as kind of this law of first mention, that if you really want to understand love in the first cause, love originally was that which coexisted in the Godhead before there was a human race. There was this love between father and son.

And so there's so many places like this. But when we go back to the very first sin in the Bible, the first sin in the Bible, of course, we could look at Lucifer, the rebellion and pride with which he rejected God as being kind of the first cosmic sin, the first human sin in the garden, teaches us much about the nature and the origin of sin in general. But in the very first relationship, the very first family, the very first time that people are interacting together, the first sin against humanity, if you will, this law of first mention leads us to the issue of anger.

And so you think about all of the wars and all of the struggles and all the difficulties and conflicts that people have had, both nationally and then just within family and working relationships. This anger issue goes all the way back to the very beginning. It is core.

It is central to all types of conflict. And so in this first story with Cain, God immediately goes to the heart of the issue. He goes to the heart of Cain's problem here and he asks him, why are you so angry? Now, God, of course, knew why Cain was angry.

But he wants Cain to think about this. He wants Cain to consider this. Now, one of the other things that I have had as a foundation or a presupposition for questions God asks is that God would never ask a question arbitrarily or capriciously without a purpose.

Jesus said that we would give an account on the day of judgment for every idle word that we speak. Well, if that is incumbent upon us, if we have that kind of a mandate, that sort of responsibility, well, certainly God takes his own words seriously. So God does not speak idle words and Jesus does not speak idle words.

So if there is a question that is in the Bible, it is not there for no reason. It is there for a purpose. If there is a question that Jesus asks, it is there for a purpose.

But because it is recorded in the Holy Scripture, it is not merely there for the people who lived 4,000 years ago or 2,000 years ago. There also must be some application for us today. There must be something that we are supposed to learn from this.

So when God asks this question, Why are you so angry? It is a question that we have to grapple with. It is a question that we must wrestle with. What is it that makes us angry? And so I want to dig into this a little bit and see what the rest of Scripture has to say on this topic of anger.

Now one of the things that we see inherent and embedded in this narrative of Cain and his brother Abel is that Abel brings a sacrifice and God is pleased with it and God accepts it. And Cain brings a sacrifice as well, a different type of offering, an offering from the ground as opposed to an offering of blood. And God does not show regard for it.

And there is this envy, there is this jealousy that springs up in Cain's heart against his brother. He is very angry and it says his face fell. In other words, he has become depressed.

He is brooding, he is stewing over this. He is allowing this to affect him emotionally. And James chapter 3 tells us this, in James 3, 14-18, it says, But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. So in this passage, we see that there are two root issues that if you have them in your life or in a church, if you have these two issues, then you are going to have, as the scripture tells us, disorder in every evil practice. Disorder in every vile practice.

Now, as a church, would you like, as a church body, to have within your faith community here, to have disorder in every vile practice going on within your church? Yeah, I wouldn't think so. I mean, it doesn't sound like the kind of thing that we would all vote and say, yeah, that sounds like a good plan. Let's aim for that.

But the inroad to that, the seeds of that, the source of that, according to James here, is envy and selfish ambition, or jealousy and selfish ambition. Now, I'll be honest. When we think of the list of hideous sins, the list of really terrible sins that will cause problems in life or in a community or in a nation, we don't tend to think of those as being way up there on the priority list of things that we need to identify and snuff out.

And yet there are so many places within a church where that envy and that selfish ambition come in. Well, why did they get chosen to be on the worship team and why didn't anybody ask me to be on the worship

team? Or, you know, why did they get noticed when they cleaned the church building on Saturday and when I cleaned it on Saturday, nobody mentioned it in the announcements. You know, I hear this kind of thing in churches and it's this little, you know, well, I was there last Sunday and the pastor didn't even shake my hand.

I mean, he's, how rude can you be? You know, just this sense of, I'm being mistreated here. I'm not being respected. People don't recognize the values that I bring to the family or to the community or whatever it is.

And these roots of selfishness, of jealousy, of envy, of selfish ambition, of wanting to push ourselves to the front, of wanting to be noticed, of wanting to have people pay attention to us, these things will eventually, when they reach their end result, when they grow to fruition, they will result in disorder and every vile practice. They will disintegrate a church like a cancer, eating it slowly from the inside out until it dies. And so, as an individual and as a church body, these are things that we have to be on the lookout for.

These are things that we have to be ruthless with in our own life to uproot these weeds, to get them out before they poison and contaminate our relationships. Envy and jealousy are ultimately rooted in dissatisfaction with God. It's a slight, it's an accusation against God's justice.

God has not ultimately been fair with us, we would feel in our minds. That God has chosen to perhaps elevate someone else and not to elevate us. And this is the situation that happens with Cain.

Cain is not foundationally and fundamentally angry with Abel. He's expressing anger toward his brother, but his primary anger is really vented toward God. God has been unjust here.

God has been unfair. And sometimes this happens very subconsciously. I think most of us, we would hate to admit that we have an accusation in our heart against God.

But this sense of jealousy and envy ultimately is a questioning of his character. It's a questioning of his goodness. It's a questioning of whether or not he has dealt with us rightly.

It is a tremendously dangerous sin of presumption. So this issue of conflict, where does conflict come from? Conflict, James tells us in James 4, 1 and 2 is this. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this? Now, this is, I'm going to stop here.

This is where the Bible gets really practical. I love this. Because if you've ever been in any kind of relational conflict with a sibling, with a spouse, with a co-worker, with anybody, sometimes you're in the middle of this conflict and you think to yourself, how did we get here? How does this happen? What is causing this? What's causing this conflict? Why are we not getting along? Well, the Bible is so practical.

It's so applicable to everyday life. It tells us exactly what the root causes. And so you know, if you take this passage and you learn this principle and learn how to apply it, you know what's causing the problem.

What causes conflict? What causes fights within you? James says this. Is it not this? That your passions are at war within you, you desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

Every single relational conflict ever, ever, has to do with an unfulfilled or an unmet desire. Think about that. On somebody's part, on someone's part, there is something that someone wants and they're not

getting it.

And so they get frustrated. They get angry. And they want to remedy the situation.

And when the situation is not being remedied, when they're not able to fix the problem, when they can't control this other person or something like that, they lash out. And it says they fight. They covet and they kill.

I mean, it can go really bad. It can get really, really ugly. Another term that can be used here is the term expectations.

Another term that we can use almost synonymously with this word desire. You have these desires within you. Sometimes we have these expectations.

We want things to go a certain way. We expect life to treat us a certain way. And when it doesn't, we come unglued.

We can't handle it. We can't deal with it. And so what I've done in my life as a practice is I have begun to ask myself this question.

If I ever find myself in a relational conflict with somebody, we're not getting along or there's some kind of strife or enmity between the two of us, I'll ask myself two questions. First of all, what do I want? And then secondly, what do they want? What do I want and what do they want? Now, sometimes this brings the whole situation into complete clarity. And sometimes the problem can be fixed and solved very simply.

Sometimes not so simply. Sometimes I will ask myself, what do I want? And oftentimes I'll say, I don't know. I don't know what I want.

Oftentimes for me, it's a sense of, well, I want to be understood and I want my feelings and my viewpoints to be understood and if not agreed with, at least validated. That, okay, I understand where you're coming from and I get your point. I may not agree with it, but I understand you.

For me, not being understood is very difficult. And so for me, oftentimes that's a point of contention that I feel like you don't understand me. You're not listening to me.

You haven't really given time to hear my perspective and so it creates a frustration. I want to be heard. I want to be understood.

So whatever it is, sometimes that helps me to be able to identify, what is it that I want in this situation? And then I'll ask the question of the other person. In my mind, I'll say, what do they want? What do they want? And sometimes I'll say, I have no idea what they want. I really don't.

If I knew that, I might be able to solve the whole issue. I might be able to remedy the whole situation if I just knew what they wanted. You know, this may seem like a silly illustration, but we moved into a new house two years ago.

We live in Michigan. And when we moved into this house, the people who owned the house previously were one of these families that, they always entered their house from a side door. There's this perfectly good, usable front door.

It makes all the sense in the world to just go in the front door. But for some reason, for them, they thought going in the side door was a better idea. I don't understand.

The longer I've lived in this house and seen some of the things that they did to the house, the less I understand them. But at any rate, I digress. But what happened when we moved in was within the first week, we got a UPS shipment.

And the UPS lady dropped the boxes off at the side door. Well, we don't use the side door. And so they sat out there for a couple of days, and I didn't see them.

And so when I got them, I thought, well, I know how to fix this. I'll put a sign on that door that says UPS, please use the front door. That'll solve the problem.

So the next time, a couple days later, when we got a shipment, I get a knock on the door, and I open the door, and here's the UPS lady. And she says, I don't understand why I can't just leave the boxes at the side door. And I said, well, I'm a new owner here, and apparently the previous owners used that door.

We don't use that door anymore. We use the front door. So we want the shipments to come to the front door.

And she said, well, I don't understand. And she said, I don't understand why I can't just leave them there. And I said, well, here's the beauty of it.

You don't need to understand. You just need to bring them to the front door. You bring them to the front door, I'll pick up my boxes.

That'll kind of be our relationship. But she didn't like this. She did not like this.

And so the next time that there was a shipment, I hear a knock on the door, I open the door, and she says, I don't understand why I can't just leave the boxes by the side door. So she obviously has this frustration, and she's just angry about it, right? And so I'm trying to figure out a way to resolve this. So I ask myself, okay, what do I want? Well, what I want is I want my boxes at the front door so they don't get rained on, or they don't get forgotten and property gets damaged.

I want them at the front door where I'll see them. So then I thought, what does she want? Well, I know she wants to drop them off at the side door. I know that.

But why does she want to drop them off at the side door? And I thought, okay, I know what it is. For her to take them to the front door, it requires an additional 15 steps. She has a busy day.

You know, this is just adding on to her workload. And so with this additional 15 steps, this is creating crisis. So I thought, okay, I've got an idea.

So the next time I hear the UPS truck coming down the driveway, I actually walk out into my driveway, and I stand with my arms open. And I wait, and she gets out of the truck, and she comes over and she hands me the box. And I'm smiling, because I'm thinking, I'm solving the problem.

And she says, I don't understand why I can't just put them by the side door. Now I really don't know what you want. I do not know what you want.

And so, you know, on one level, I can't say that this is causing me tremendous consternation or that I lose sleep over it or anything like that. I mean, there are some relationships that are important enough to me that I will go through Herculean effort to try to bridge this chasm. Bonding with our UPS lady is just not that important to me.

And so, you know, I'll give nominal effort to it and no more. And I can only hope to God that she's not part of Calvary Chapel Network and watches this video online. But, you know, so I use that just as an illustration.

Sometimes it's very difficult to understand what the other person wants. But once you find out what you want, and once you find out what somebody else wants, then the question is, is there a way that there can be a synthesis here? Is there a way that these two ideas or these two desires can coexist meaningfully? And sometimes there is and sometimes there's not. Sometimes there's a couple ways you can go about it.

One way is that you can say, I'm just going to let the other person have their way. I mean, for example, in that illustration I just used, I could just let her drop them off at the side door. That would probably resolve the conflict.

I'm not willing to do that in this particular situation. There are some situations where you can give, where you can just say, you know what, it's not that big of a deal. I don't have to have my way.

I can just let someone else have their way and I can be inconvenienced. Sometimes that works. There's sometimes where that doesn't work because sometimes you're talking about a moral issue.

Sometimes as a parent, a teenager wants to be involved in an activity that you believe is going to be harmful for them. And you as a parent have a responsibility before God, as a caretaker and shepherd and steward of this young life. And you can't just cave in.

You can't just acquiesce to what they want. Sometimes you have to say, no, for your own good, I can't allow you to participate in this. I have to say no to you.

Even though this will prolong the tension, I have to say no. So sometimes compromise doesn't work in that way because it's not good for the other person. You can't just cave in.

You can't just give in. But you shouldn't. You shouldn't just give in.

Or you would be enabling someone to harm themselves or to sin or something like that. But then also in identifying what the other person wants, the one thing that I suggest in a situation like this, and this is kind of what I've had to resort to with my UPS lady, sometimes you just have to pray for them. Sometimes you just have to pray that God will change their heart.

There's obviously some additional frustration that this individual brings to her job that probably isn't related to me at all, something preexisting that isn't really caused by the box issue. That's just sort of how it surfaces. And so there are some things that that's the only real place that you have to deal with the situation is just to pray that God will work in their lives, work in their heart, and as the scripture says, in as much as it lies within you, live at peace with all men.

There are some people who will not allow you to live at peace with them. They just won't have it that way. There has to be strife.

There has to be contention. And so for some people you cannot live peaceably with them. They won't allow it.

But in as much as it lies within you, do everything that you can to seek peace and pursue it. I didn't write down the reference on that passage, but I remember one time doing a study on that verse. It says seek peace and pursue it.

And the pursue it word there has the sense of it's very aggressive, and it's almost militaristic. It's the kind of term that would be used, say, in an athletic competition or something where you chase after an opponent and you tackle them down and you pin them to the ground. So it says seek peace and pursue it.

It's this really forceful, aggressive, relentless pursuit of peace. Isn't that ironic? Isn't it interesting how there's that juxtaposition of those two ideas? We sometimes think of peace as being a very passive concept that we just sort of sit back and let it happen. But the Scripture tells us we're supposed to relentlessly pursue peace in as much as it lies within us to do that.

So is anger permissible? Is anger something that God allows? Well, I know a lot of times I hear parents justify anger in their relationship with their children by saying that I have righteous anger. I have righteous indignation. Well, if you ever do a study in the Bible, and I strongly encourage you to do that, a study in the Bible on the topic of anger, you'll find that there's only a few places in the entire Bible where anger is spoken of as being allowed at all.

And in most cases, it's very soundly condemned. Now again, you may not have heard that, and I know it's very common within the church, within Christian circles, to be very allowing, to be very tolerant of the concept of us having anger in our relationships with other people. But the Scripture doesn't seem to do that.

Ecclesiastes 3.8 says, There's a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. So there does seem to be an allowance for a broad spectrum of relational emotions and even for a time of force at certain points. So I don't want to give the impression that anger has absolutely no place in the life of a Christian, but as we go further through this and we look at it, I think you'll see that the Bible speaks very strongly and warns very strongly about the danger of anger.

In Psalm chapter 4, verses 4 through 5, it says, Be angry and do not sin. Ponder in your own hearts on your beds and be silent. That means stop and think about this, consider this.

Offer right sacrifices and put your trust in the Lord. So here it says, Be angry but don't sin. Again, it gives an allowance for anger, but immediately attaches a warning label to it, as though sin and anger really go very closely together, hand in hand.

I think it's interesting too that it says, Put your trust in the Lord. Because again, anger is ultimately rooted in pride and it's rooted in unbelief. It's rooted in pride and unbelief or distrust of God.

Almost all sin actually is rooted in pride and unbelief, if you think about it. But if you get down to the irreducible complexity of sin, the basic core components that are always there at work, is this sense of our own self-importance, but then also this sense of not really believing, not really trusting that God has everything under control, that God has our best interests in mind, that God is always working. Jesus said, My Father is always working, even to this time, and I myself am at work.

God is at work. And Romans 8.28 tells us that He works all things together for the good of those who love Him, for those who are called according to His purpose. So these difficulties that we're experiencing, these tensions, these conflicts, ultimately, while they may not be good in and of themselves, they ultimately are working for a good purpose.

And so we're doubting that. We're not believing God when we respond in anger. And so it says, Put your trust in the Lord.

Quiet your hearts. Be silent. Put your trust in the Lord.

Ephesians 4.26-28 says something very similar. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

So again, it mentions this concept of anger being present, but then immediately puts the warning label of don't sin, as though these two are really in tandem. And then it gives an expiration date. And it says, Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.

Deal with this. You can't allow this to fester and to brood and to grow. It's like that casserole dish that you discover in the back of the refrigerator that's been there a little bit too long, and you pull it out and you pull back the lid or the cellophane and you go, Whoo, okay, that's not good.

And so you have two options. Either you dig that out and you deal with it and you get rid of it, or you go, I think I'll push that a little further back into the fridge. Now the thing that you can be assured of is that whatever festers and boils and grows back there is not going to improve the situation.

I mean, it is possible eventually it will grow legs and walk away. I mean, I suppose you can wait for that and hope for that. But for the most part, that is something that you have to dig in and actually deal with.

And so it gives a sunset clause to this. It says don't let the sun go down on your anger and then give no opportunity to the devil. Again, it's implicit that your anger has a very strong likelihood of giving an opportunity for the devil.

Again, very important for us to remember. So it says this in Ephesians 4, 26-27. Be angry and don't sin.

Don't let the sun go down on your anger. And then just a few verses later in verse 31, it says this. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice.

So in Ephesians 4, 31, just a few verses later, it says put away all anger from you. Now, I mean, that's pretty strong. All anger, just get rid of it.

Just clean house and don't have this be a part of your life. Colossians 3, 8 reiterates this. It says but now you must put them all away.

Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Psalm 37, 8-9 says refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Threaten not yourself.

It tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land. If I could draw this out on kind of like a timeline or a continuum, we have different stages or different facets, different phases of anger.

And so if you put on one end of the spectrum something like rage, most of us would say, if we said, should rage be part of the normal Christian life? We'd probably say, no, that doesn't sound very advisable. So we would say rage, that's bad, or wrath, or anger, or malice, or some of those kinds of things. Those things we think, yeah, that's pretty bad, shouldn't do that.

But then as we go on the continuum, on the spectrum, you have things like frustration, irritation, annoyance, those kinds of things. Now that doesn't sound so bad, does it? But really those are all part of the anger spectrum. And the problem with anger is not merely the degree of anger, the problem is with the anger.

Does that make sense? And so we sometimes excuse it just because we're just experiencing irritation, and annoyance, and frustration towards someone, especially in our families. And we feel like we should be allowed that, we should be given a free pass for that. And yet when the scripture says put away all anger, it's talking about the whole spectrum of it.

It's talking about the whole gamut of the outworkings of that emotion of anger. Proverbs 22, 24 through 25 says, Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare. I know this personally from my own life, from my own experience.

My parents divorced when I was six, and my mother remarried a man who was not a Christian, and he was very physically and emotionally and psychologically abusive. And so from the age of six to 15, I lived in this really highly physically abusive situation. And you think about that age of six to 15, it shapes your identity.

It shapes your view of masculinity. It shapes your view of manhood and what it means to be a man and all that. And really every example that I had growing up in my home of manhood was an example or a prototype of exactly how not to do things.

I was a human punching bag. That was how I grew up. And so when I was a teenager, this had become a ruling and guiding and abiding part of my life.

Anger. I was a little shrimpy kid. I was the kind of kid that bullies on the playground loved to pick on because I just looked very weak and defenseless.

And there would be these big, burly, bully kids who would taunt me and tease me and pick on me, and I would take them out. And they were always shocked because they didn't expect that. For them, it was something they were doing just in fun, but they didn't understand that I had rage bottled up inside of me.

And, you know, you take someone who's big and match them up with someone who has just unrelenting rage and unleash that rage, you don't know what happens. You don't know what hits you. And so I remember at the age of 15, God was really beginning to deal with me on this issue of anger, and I prayed and I asked God and I said, God, if someday in the future you would ever have me get married and if I would ever have children, I'm scared of what I might do.

I'm scared of who I might become because I knew that I was becoming the very thing that I hated. And this is a principle that I've found to be true, that if you can't forgive, if you can't let bitterness and resentment go, it's a very strange phenomenon, but you can become what you hate. And that's what was happening to me.

I was becoming the very thing that I despised, becoming the very thing that I hated. And there was no way for me to modify my behavior. I mean, there was no amount of mind over matter that was going to work for me.

There was nothing that I could do to stop this anger addiction. And I just cried out to God and I said, God, if I would ever in the future get married, have children, and I would ever see fear in my wife's eyes or fear in my children's eyes because of me, then please just kill me now. Just take me out of the world because I would rather die than to do to someone else what's been done to me.

And I'm so grateful for the grace of God because what God's grace does is it does the things for us that we are incapable of doing for ourselves. The Holy Spirit has the ability to transform lives and to empower us by His Spirit, by His grace, to be what we could never be in the natural. No amount of counseling could have ever gotten me out of it.

No amount of self-will would have ever gotten me out of it. It had to be God's grace. And so God delivered me in a very supernatural way from that kind of rage.

But then I had to learn God's principles on this. I had to learn what God's Word said. And I deeply studied this issue of anger because I didn't want this to be a besetting sin in my life.

So I had to learn how to overcome this, how to walk in newness of life. So, there's another passage in James that I think is so powerful, particularly for parents. It's in James 1, verses 19 and 20.

And when I found this passage, it just totally changed my life. So James says this, Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

Okay, so it sounds like anger is allowed here, right? Just be slow to it. You can get angry, but just be kind of, you know, don't get there quickly. But then the next part says this, For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Period. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. We have this desire to see the right kind of outcome with our children.

We want certain kinds of behavior. We want certain attitudes. And frankly, we have good motivation in that.

And we usually have good desire in it. We want them to be godly. We want them to be kind.

We want them to share. We want them to love other people, etc., etc. And we want that so badly that we will use any means, no matter how harsh, no matter how difficult, to make them kind and loving.

It doesn't work. And it can't work. And here's why.

Because it's the law of sowing and reaping. If you take a corn kernel and you plant it into the ground, because of the nature of the DNA of that corn kernel, you can never reasonably anticipate that an apple tree is going to grow there from the corn kernel. It's not the right kind of seed.

And so, as a parent, when you are using the seed of human anger in your child's life, you can never reasonably anticipate that you're going to get the fruit of the righteousness of God to come forth in their life. And this is true in pastoral ministry as well. When we deal with people and we're in any kind of

leadership, the same thing for employers, you can never anticipate that you're going to get the result that you're hoping for by using the wrong kind of seed.

You have to plant the right kind of seed to get the right outcome. If you plant the seed of anger in your child's life, what you will reap is anger, bitterness, and rejection from your children, if that is your default mode, if that is your go-to, if that is your constant, persistent approach to relationship with your child, given time, given space, you will experience anger, bitterness, and rejection from your child. It's the law of sowing and reaping.

It's how God has established the universe. And so, as a parent, we have to make sure that we're using the right kinds of tools in relationship with our children. There are several warnings that are given in the Bible about anger and about judgment for those who unjustly appropriate anger.

Matthew 5, 21 through 24 says, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire.

So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there, remember, your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. In James 4, 11 through 12, it says, Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

The one who speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy.

But who are you to judge your neighbor? Again, sometimes we use this argument that, well, God gets angry. God gets angry, so if God can get angry, then I can get angry. Well, it is true.

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. God gets angry. People say, well, Jesus got angry and He took a whip and He drove everyone out of the temple.

I want to challenge you to consider that passage. One thing to consider is that it says, Jesus sat down and He fashioned out a whip. He fashioned out a whip.

Now, that takes a good long while to make a whip, to braid a whip. But He took a long time, braided the whip, and then drove them out. So the concept that we sometimes have, perhaps from Hollywood movies or something, of Jesus just in this rage, just out of control, Jesus was very purposeful in what He did.

And we know that, you know, the scripture says Jesus was tested in every way that we are, but yet without sin. We know that His application of it, however that was, was without sin. It seems that within the infinite holiness of God, God has the capacity to be able to have anger and distribute it appropriately in a way that's not sinful.

We don't seem to have that capacity. It seems that, from what the scripture teaches, that whenever we take the emotion of anger and we externalize it, it goes bad and that it's harmful to people, that it causes harm and damage. So I want to be careful that I differentiate here.

I don't believe that the Bible teaches that the emotion of anger is sinful. You know, we feel this emotion of anger, and frankly, I believe that God has placed that emotion of anger within us at times. But what it seems to me, particularly when you go through the Old Testament and you study some of what the Bible says about anger in the Old Testament, is that there is a part of God's nature that is also part of our nature, and that is this attribute of justice.

There's an attribute of justice that is innate to God, but it's also something that He communicates to us because we're made in His image. And when we're treated unjustly, there's this emotion of anger. God gets angry at injustice.

And you see all the way through the Old Testament, He's angry at injustice. And so it seems to me that the places where the Scripture allows for anger, it is almost always in a place of vindication and protection of the innocent who are violated. It is in a posture of justice that we see the weak and the oppressed, those who cannot defend and protect themselves, we see them being violated, and that anger has an appropriate expression in those places.

I personally can't find anywhere in the Scripture where we are encouraged to externalize an emotion of anger when it relates to a slight against ourselves. So it seems to me that biblically the application, the proper application of anger is towards the protection and to see prevailing justice applied for the innocent. But for us as individuals, Jesus says, Turn the other cheek.

Walk the second mile. Go ahead and be the one who takes the blow. That's very difficult for us.

It's very hard for us to do that. And so it seems to me that this is this differentiation, that the emotion of anger itself is not inherently wrong, it's not inherently sinful, and I think it's even God-given. But when we express it, when we externalize it, that usually is where things go bad.

And almost always when we externalize anger, it has to do with the fact that we have been offended. Our children have inconvenienced us in some way, or they've embarrassed us, or they've annoyed us, and so we respond in anger. But it's a very selfish kind of anger, and our response tends to be inappropriate.

But Jesus, as opposed to being someone who went off in a rage, gave us an example. And in 1 Peter 2:23 it says, When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten.

But he continued entrusting himself to the one who judges justly. Again, I want to go back to that point. Jesus could take and endure the suffering that he experienced at the hands of unjust people, because he knew ultimately the Father is in control, God is the judge, God will deal with this situation.

That's where we have to rest as believers. But when we have this accusation in our heart that God is not really for us, he's not really on our side, he doesn't have our back, he's not watching out for our best interests, so we better do it for him. We have to help God out here.

That's where things go bad, and it is unbelief. It's doubting God's good nature, it's doubting God's good character, and it's pride, it's presumption of the worst kind, to say God is not adequately doing his job, therefore we have to step in and intervene in the situation on our behalf, because God has failed us. I understand that beneath the surface, it's something we're not necessarily thinking of consciously, but subconsciously, in our heart, that's the accusation that's there.

We wouldn't voice that, we would never tell people that, but that's what's going on inside of us. It's an innate distrust. We have to go back to, do I believe God? Do I trust God? Am I going to rest in the promises of God? Almost done here, just let me read a couple more passages.

There's this parallel in Galatians chapter 5, two columns, and it says this, Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, I'm just going to jump forward a little bit, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That's that whole spectrum, that whole continuum of this emotion of anger. And he says these things come out of the flesh, these are the deeds of the flesh.

But, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We're told in that same passage there in Galatians 5, that if you walk according to the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The way that you overcome anger is not by trying really hard to overcome anger. That will never work.

If you say this morning, okay, I'm going to do better, I'm going to work harder, I'm going to be stronger, I'm going to make up my mind, and come Monday I am not going to get mad. I'm just going to white-knuckle it, I'm going to make it through the day, I'm not going to yell, I'm not going to scream, I'm not going to slam doors, I'm not going to throw things, I'm going to walk around like, you know, Mr. Rogers on weed or something, and I'm just going to be happy all the time, and I'm going to watch a lot of Joel Osteen until I perfect that smile, and I can do it, I can do it. No, you can't.

You can't, and you won't. You will fail. You will fail just like you failed every other time that you tried that.

Because the way to overcome the flesh is never by using your flesh to overcome the flesh. It doesn't work. The way that you overcome the flesh is by learning how to walk in the Spirit.

That's how you overcome the flesh. Well, what does that look like? Well, that sounds like a great sermon, doesn't it? So, at some point, it will come up, and there will be this wonderful sermon. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? But I will say this.

In John 15, Jesus said, If you abide in me, if you remain in me, well, let me back up. He said, I'm the true vine. You're the branches.

Any branch that remains in me, that abides in me, will bear much fruit. Just will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

And so, when you think about a branch that's connected to the true vine, that branch does not produce fruit because it tries really, really hard to bear fruit. I want to bear some fruit today. No, no, no.

It's just attached to the vine. It's abiding in the vine. It can't help but bear fruit.

And that's the difference. Walking in the Spirit is connected to this abiding in Jesus. And that means, literally, you have to spend time alone with Jesus every single day.

Every day of your life, you have to spend time alone with Jesus. You get in His Word. You spend time in prayer.

You have fellowship with Him. You draw your life from Him. Because apart from Him, you can't do anything but the works of the flesh.

But if you abide in Him, if you remain in Him, if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh and you will bear the fruit of the Spirit. All these things that it says are the antithesis of anger, you will do that. You will fulfill that.

Not because you're trying so hard, but just because the life of the Spirit of Christ in you comes out. It's not you anymore. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory.

This is what changes us. This is what transforms us. This is our sanctification.

This is not maintaining our salvation through works. This is the life of Jesus in us transforming us to become like Him and overcome our sin. So, anger, it says here, self-control.

I just want to speak to this for a minute because this seems like a bit of an oxymoron. Anger is very connected to the concept of control. It really is.

And we sometimes feel like life is out of control and that things are outside of our ability to manipulate them and manage them and make them all happen the way that we want to. And when things start spiraling out of control, what we want to do is we want to come in and be a control freak. And we want everything to go exactly the way we want it to and we want to control other people.

We want them to behave exactly as we want them to. And so this concept of self-control is actually a little bit misleading because what self-control biblically means is not you need to become more of a control freak. It's you need to become less of a control freak.

You need to allow the Spirit to control you. It's about being controlled by the Holy Spirit, not being controlled by your flesh. And so, but let me read some of the passages that talk about the importance of self-control but keeping in mind that the idea is that we want to be controlled by the Spirit.

We want to be controlled by the mind of Christ. So Proverbs 12,16 says, The vexation, or anger, of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult. Proverbs 14,17 says, A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 14,29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. Proverbs 15,1 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15,18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

Proverbs 16,32 Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Proverbs 19,11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, for it is his glory to overlook an offense. Proverbs 25,28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Proverbs 29,11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. Proverbs 29,22 A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. Ecclesiastes 7,9 Do not be quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools.

So we are shown here that we participate with the Holy Spirit in this process of sanctification, and we allow Him to change our hearts, and we become obedient to Him, and we do the things that are in keeping with His Spirit, but we don't do it in our own flesh. We rely on Him, and that means literally you have to create some white space in your life. You have to create some margin so that you have time to be alone with Jesus every single day.

And if you don't do that, then you can expect to continue to live a defeated life. And this is how you get free of any besetting sin, any kind of addiction. It's the same thing.

You will never get free from any besetting sin or addiction by white-knuckling it and trying harder. How you will get free is you dig deeply into the Word of God. You spend time in prayer.

You spend time with Jesus every single day until you spend so much time with Him that He changes your mind, and He changes your heart, and He changes your inclinations, and He changes your attitude, and you no longer live the way that you once did. So again, I encourage you to check out my book, Questions God Asks, and then the new one, Questions Jesus Asks. And as parents, I notice we have a lot of children here.

I'm blessed to see that. This book, Full-Time Parenting, A Guide to Family-Based Discipleship, is kind of a biblical theology of parenting and family and what our responsibility is as parents in teaching and training and discipling our children and passing on our faith to them. So I thank you so much for the opportunity to share with you this morning, to worship together with you.

And again, you can visit our website at [familyrenewal.org](http://familyrenewal.org).

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/g8M308pU2VI.mp4>

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