

Rich Humphrey

SESSION 1 | What Is Anger & What Does It Reveal About Our Heart?

I. ANGER IS A UNIVERSAL PROBLEM

Colossians 3:8: *⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.*

II. WHAT IS ANGER?

“Anger is an active displeasure toward something important enough to care about.”
– David Powlison

In every episode of anger at least three things happen

1. You identify something as wrong
2. You feel disapproval of it
3. You take action in some way to do something about it

Ephesians 4:26a *Be angry, but do not sin.*

Exodus 32:9-10 ⁹*And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”*

Mark 3:5 [Speaking of Jesus’ reaction to the Pharisees when they refused to acknowledge that healing on the Sabbath was permissible] ⁵*And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart*

III. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE GET ANGRY?

Genesis 4:3-8 ³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, ⁴ 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, ⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. ⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?" ⁷ 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 contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him

Anger is consuming

Your Mind Operates in Judicial Mode

"The trial is rigged. It's a kangaroo court and the. Verdict is predetermined. The punishment is vigilante justice. With rare exceptions, in this private courtroom of the mind the accused is allowed no defense attorney, no character witnesses, no due process, no extenuating circumstances, no evidence to the contrary, no second chances, no plea of innocence, no possibility the accuser got it wrong, no possibility of mercy for the guilty!" —David Powlison

Your Motives Operate in God-like Mode

"When anger goes bad, it's because motives operate in the godlike mode. "I want my way. I demand that you love me on my terms. I will prove that I am right at all costs. Proving that you are inexcusably and outrageously wrong is one way to prove that I am right, and that I'm a victim of your ridiculous iniquity. I want to be in control. You should obey me, listen to me, attend to my every want. How dare you cross my almighty will." —David Powlison

IV. HOW DO WE OVERCOME OUR ANGER?

The Key is Learning to Think Differently about our Anger

Look Deep and Ask What Is Truly Driving Your Anger

"When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an 'idol,' something you are actually worshiping. When such a thing is threatened, your anger is absolute. Your anger is actually the way the idol keeps you in its service, in its chains. Therefore if you find that, despite all the efforts to forgive, your anger and bitterness cannot subside, you may need to look deeper and ask, 'What am I defending? What is so important that I cannot live without?' It may be that, until some inordinate desire is identified and confronted, you will not be able to master your anger." –Tim Keller

Develop a Gospel-Driven Humility

The Gospel reminds us that we are almost never totally innocent victims

The Gospel reminds us that our point of view might be wrong

The Gospel empowers us to respond with mercy because we are reminded of mercy God has shown us. Any offense against us pales in comparison with our daily offense against Him.

CASE STUDY:

As you just heard, as I was preparing to teach this lesson on anger, I got angry! I was feeling (self-imposed) pressure to get the lesson and notes finished up. I asked Catherine to proofread what I had written. Just as I did, one of our kids after another came into our room with questions, conflicts, and miscellaneous stuff that required her attention. They kept her focus long enough that bedtime had come and my lesson did not get proofed. Right before everyone went to bed, I left the room and just loud enough for everyone to hear I muttered, "I'm never going to get this thing done."

1. What were my intentions with those final words?
2. Obviously, on a surface level I was angry because my lesson didn't get proofed. But, let's look a little deeper. What do you think were some of the deeper motives of my heart that lay behind my anger?
3. What aspects of the Gospel did I need to remember in that moment?
4. How would my response been different if I had been thinking about my situation in from a Gospel centered paradigm?

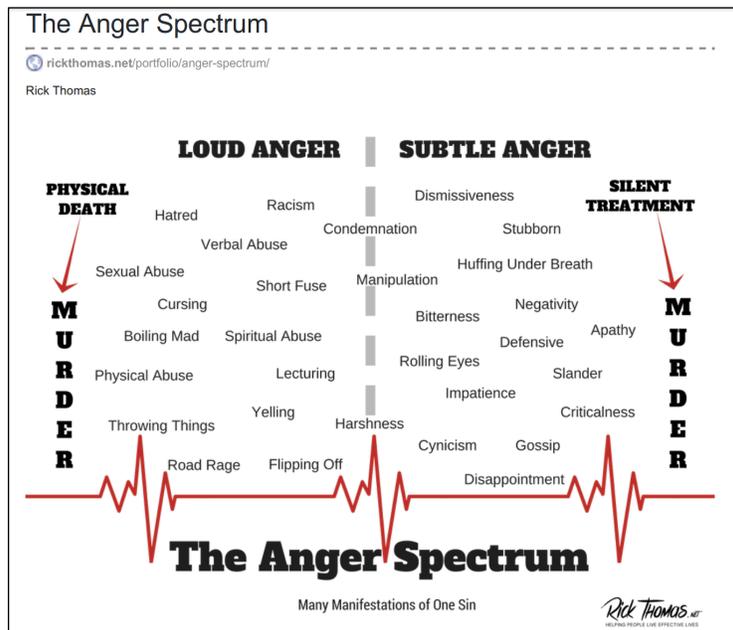
GOOD & ANGRY: OVERCOMING IRRITATION, OUTBURSTS, & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

TAKE HOME QUESTIONS:

We begin the process of overcoming our anger by taking an honest look at our hearts. David Powlison says, “self-knowledge is both a simple gift and a hard-won achievement.” Over the course of this week, spend time reflecting on the following questions. Ask God to reveal to you as you go the deep roots of your anger. Pray that He would then give you the grace, in light of His glorious Gospel to begin thinking differently about the circumstances that tempt you toward selfish anger.

If possible, get together with your spouse, or a friend (maybe from your community group) to discuss each other’s answers and pray for each other.

1. On page 53 of *Good and Angry*, Powlison says, “The smallest incident of irritation or the merest lingering bitterness reveals vast truths about you – if you’re willing to look.” Think back over the last few days.
 - a. What are the things you expressed or felt anger over?
 - b. Is there a pattern to your anger (is there a type of circumstance that consistently tempts you to be angry)?
2. As we discussed anger is expressed in a variety of different ways. The chart below lists a number of these various manifestations.



- a. Which of the terms on the chart describe the various way you express your anger?
- b. So you tend to express your anger loudly or subtly? Why?

**GOOD & ANGRY: OVERCOMING IRRITATION, OUTBURSTS,
& EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN**

3. On page 54, Powlison says, *“When anger goes astray, it says something about how we are going astray inside, about who is at the center of our universe. When anger runs amok into temper, grousing, and bitterness, you don’t just need technique to calm yourself down. You don’t just need your circumstances to change. You don’t just need other people to change. Your core motives need to change. The god you worship (my will be done, my kingdom come... or else) must be overthrown.*

Think about two or three specific episodes of anger, frustration, or bitterness you have experienced in the last few days. For each one, list:

- a. When you were angry, what did you want (think about the core motives of your heart that are being exposed)?
 - b. What do you believe about the significance of what just happened to you?
 - c. What intentions guided you during the interaction? What were you after?
4. What aspects of the Gospel do you need to remember when you are angry?
5. How would thinking with a Gospel paradigm have changed your response?