

MANAGING YOUR ANGER

Exodus 20:13

Good morning! We're on the 6th chapter of our series on the Ten Commandments called "Living a Fulfilled Life". Meaning, we're going to look at the 6th commandment which is "You shall not murder". Some of you are going, "It seems like we've been on this series forever". Maybe, you can't wait till this series is over and you're complaining silently. Well, I admit, this is a long series because, first of all, there are 10 parts in this message, right? Second of all, we had breaks which kind of extended it. And, forgive me, but I'd like to extend it with one more message entitled "You shall not complain." Ok?

Anyway, would you please turn to your Bibles and open to Exodus, Chapter 20, Verse 13. It says, "*You shall not murder.*" Now folks, that's one of the two shortest commands of the Ten Commandments. Some of you are thinking oh, boy, we get a short message today. I've entitled this message, "Managing Your Anger".

Now, murder is simply a destructive form or expression of anger and most people in life do not know how to manage their anger that leads to murder. They watch TV. And what does TV and all the violent shows, how does TV teach you to handle your anger? You get angry, pull a gun. You get angry, slap them in the face. If you get angry, cuss at them, spit on them, hit them. Not a very good form of anger management.

Now, do you know some versions of the Bible say "You shall not kill"? Well, it can be translated that way, but it loses its real meaning. The Hebrew word used here connotes the idea of premeditated or deliberate killing. That is, killing with malice aforethought. Malice aforethought is the conscious, premeditated intent to kill another human.

So, why doesn't God want us to murder? Because God is the giver of life and he alone can take it away. Acts 17:25 says, "He himself gives everyone life and breath". And in Job, it says, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away". (Job 1:21) As Christians, we believe in the sanctity of life. Sanctity of life refers to the idea that human life is sacred, holy, and precious. We cannot make a decision to kill someone with malice aforethought especially if it's an innocent baby in a mother's womb. The Psalmist says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13)

Now, Jesus took this command a step further.

Let's go to Matthew Chapter 5. In the Sermon on the Mount, he says, "*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.'*" (Matthew 5:21) Here Jesus is reminding them that it is wrong and sinful to murder a person, that punishment is waiting for the murderer. But in verse 22, he gives the command a twist. He says, "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."

Now "Raca" is an Aramaic insult. It could mean "empty-headed", "fool", "stupid", "idiot". It's a very degrading insult because you're saying that the person is contemptible and worthless. The truth that Jesus is saying here is that it is just as evil to destroy somebody's self-worth as it is to murder them. It is just as evil to put somebody down and take away their dignity as it is to take their life. Why? Because we have no right to belittle, to insult, to treat anybody worthless because God created everybody and everybody was made for a purpose. And no person is completely worthless even when they're way off base from God's plan for their lives.

Thus, Jesus is equating anger with murder. It's so serious, right? It's so serious that we need to manage our anger, we need to control our temper. Do you know anyone who can't control their temper? No looking around, ok?

Now, how do you handle your anger? That's what I'm going to talk about this morning. But first, why do we get angry? You know, right at this moment, while I'm typing these words on my computer, a breaking news from the NYTimes appeared on my screen. It said, "More than 100 dead in unrest after Indonesian soccer match." What happened was that chaos and violence erupted last night following an Indonesian league soccer match between two of the nation's biggest teams. Supporters of both teams clashed after the home team was defeated by the visiting team in the city of Malang in East Java. The police in riot gear came to quell the violence and in the process many people ran and some were trampled upon by the fleeing rioters. The count is 130 dead and numerous people injured. Because a lot of people weren't able to handle their anger.

So, why do we get angry? We **get angry for three reasons:**

1. We are hurt.

You see, physical or emotional hurt can cause feelings of anger. You hammer your thumb. Someone steps on your foot. Somebody punches you in the eye. Someone calls you a name or makes fun of you. Those are things that hurt you, and that can make you angry.

Sometimes our anger is vented on people we love even though they are not the reason. Have you ever blown up at your mom or dad for what seems to be no reason? Man takes it out on his wife who takes it out on her kid who takes it out on the dog who takes it out on the cat who takes it out on a bird who takes it out on a worm. It's the domino principle.

We get angry when

2. We are frustrated.

Sometimes nothing goes as planned. Traffic delays us, people fail us, things break on us, and we get ticked. Long lines at grocery stores, trainees at the counter, kids crying. Putin must truly be angry now because he is frustrated by the fact that his forces are being overrun by his enemies. He could go ballistic. I know I'm making light of it but I pray, we're praying that it doesn't come to that point.

It is easy to get frustrated. But ask yourself two questions:

Would getting angry change the situation?

If you can't change the situation, why get angry about it? Either fix it or forget it. When you lose your temper, you ALWAYS lose. **Will Rogers said, "Whenever you fly into a rage, you seldom make a safe landing."**

Is it really worth being upset over?

Our culture has lost its sense of what is really a crisis. Getting cut off in traffic, your mom making you clean your room, or missing your favorite TV program are not reasons for a temper tantrum.

And the third reason,

3. We are threatened.

When you back an animal into a corner, he comes out fighting. People can be the same way. If we're teased, or people pick out our personal insecurities, or question our motives, we feel threatened and get mad.

I remember a story that Pastor Ariel told me when he was still a youth pastor in the Philippines. He said that he was driving a Ford Fiera full of young people on EDSA when suddenly, there was a truck that cut him off. That was dangerous, of course, and he got really mad and chased the truck and once his Fiera was even with the truck, he was going to cuss at the guy, when he remembered there were kids who were going to hear him and what he said instead was "Pangit!". In English, "Ugly!".

Anyway, you see, anger is a choice, we get angry because we choose to. It is an attitude that we have control over. You say, “You don’t understand, when I get angry, I can’t control it. I’m like THE HULK. You won’t like me when I’m angry.” Well, if you saw the movie, the Hulk could control it. When his woman came on the scene, his attitude changed immediately.

Folks, it’s amazing to see how different people control or lose control of their anger. We see that everywhere. On the road, lots of it on the road, right, and we call it road rage, in the house and lots of it, too, and we call it domestic abuse, at work, in school, even in church. It’s been said that, “Your temper is the only thing you can’t get rid of by losing it.” As a pastor, I’m not supposed to lose my temper. But I do. Ask my wife and children. I mean, this is so pervasive that it affects everyone. No one can be not angry 100%. The key is ...managing your anger.

How do you manage your anger then? Six things. First,

1. Realize that you can be angry.

As I said earlier, everyone gets angry. Don’t feel guilty because you get angry. Sometimes we take it on ourselves and say things like, “I must be a bad person because I’m angry. I’m not a good Christian because I got angry. I’m this and that, until you get angry at yourself and you feel condemned and worthless”. What does the Bible say?

“In your anger do not sin.” (Eph. 4:26a)

Notice it says, “In your anger do not sin.” So, it is possible to be angry and not sin. You see, anger isn’t inherently wrong; in fact, even God gets angry. When Christ was in the temple turning over tables, He didn’t do it with a smile on His face. When He called the Pharisees a bunch of white-washed tombs and a pit of vipers-- He wasn’t just trying to be politically correct. He was mad.

That kind of anger is called “righteous anger”. It’s like when your kid spends hour and hours on the phone playing games while his grades plummet, then you’re right to be angry. Anger is a God-given emotion, so if you don’t get angry, check your pulse because you’re not in touch with reality.

2. Recognize the danger of anger.

So, you can get angry. But what does the verse command us? “Do not sin when you’re angry.” Being angry is not a sin. What you do afterwards can be a sin. And that’s the danger when we’re unable to manage our anger. So, you’re not sinning when you scold your child, even raising your voice and making gestures but when you spew out hurtful words or you spank them or smack them numerous times, then that is child abuse and you’re committing a sin. Doesn’t the Bible condone spanking? Yes, it does. In fact, there are several verses that encourage the use of a rod. Prov. 22:15, “Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.” Also, in Prov. 22:15, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.”

This is not a blanket statement from the Bible though because these are principles not commands. It’s up to you to spank or not depending on the child’s age or stubbornness. But spanking is helpful when it is explained to a child why it is being done.

When we were kids, our mom would spank us only after she explained why she was doing it. She would ask us to open our hands like this, with palms up, then with a ruler in her hand, say, “Rolly, do you know why I’m going to spank you?” “Yes, mommy, because I hit my sister.” And I would close my eyes knowing that it would come and when it came I would cry, of course, although it didn’t hurt much. I must admit it was effective. Anyway, I think you get my point.

To manage your anger, you need to, first, realize you can be angry. Second, recognize the danger of anger and then third,

3. Discover the reason behind your anger.

Discover the reason behind your anger. In other words, try to understand, “Why do I get angry? What am I upset about?”

For this one, you go back to the three primary reasons I mentioned earlier why we get angry. Is it because I’m hurt? Somebody has said mean things to me in the past and I keep remembering it and it makes me unsettled and restless?

Maybe, I’m angry because I’m frustrated. I have broken dreams, my marriage is in the rocks, my children are disobedient, my work is not fulfilling or I don’t get enough recognition, I don’t have friends or my friends betrayed me, God is not listening to my prayers.

It could be I’m angry because I feel threatened. I feel like people are talking behind me. I get the feeling that people are out to get me. Or the threat is real like, my husband is not as loving as before and I’m afraid he is having an affair.

4. Deal with your anger immediately.

This is very important. Don’t hold on to your anger. Don’t gloat over it. Don’t let it turn into a grudge. Now, look at **Ephesians 4:26-27**, “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” He’s saying here, “When you hold on to anger, you give the devil a foothold in your life, because anger, bottled up, becomes resentment and bitterness.”

Anger may not be wrong at times; indeed, it may be appropriate. But when it turns into resentment it is wrong. “Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry.” That is to say, “Don’t ever go to bed cross with each other.” That’s a good rule for husbands and wives. Don’t go to bed angry, because the moment you hit the pillow, all that anger begins to eat you up, until in a few minutes you find yourself seething. Someone was asked, “Do you wake up grouchy in the morning?” And she said, “No, I usually let him sleep!”

Ecclesiastes 7:9 (Good News Bible) says, “Keep your temper under control. It is foolish to harbor a grudge.” It’s crazy to be resentful because it always hurts you far more than it hurts the other person.

A lady went to her doctor. She was feeling deathly ill. He examined her and said, “You have hydrophobia - you have rabies.” She got out a pencil and a piece of paper and began to write. He said, “What are you doing - making your will?” She said, “No, I’m making a list of the people I’m going to bite!”

Part of anger management is learning how to forgive. People sometimes say, “I don’t get anything out of going to church.” Well, Jesus said, “When you come to worship, and before you offer your gift to the Lord, go and set things right with your brother and then come and you’ll get something out of your worship experience”. That’s a paraphrase of Matthew 5:23,24. So, get that bitterness out of your life. Learn to forgive.

5. Stop and think before you speak.

An old saying goes, “If you’re upset at someone, count to ten before you open your mouth.” Stop and think before you speak. James 1:19 says, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” What happens when we become angry is that we become very slow to listen and very quick to speak! James is saying here, “Put your mind in gear before you engage your mouth.” Is it true to say that when we get angry we say things we regret? Isn’t it true that blowing your stack only creates air pollution? Somebody said, “A sharp tongue is the quickest way to cut your own throat!” Watch your words. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.” The way you talk will increase the anger or reduce the anger.

For example, if you want more appreciation from your mate, and you come home and you blow up at her, is that going to make her more appreciative of you?

Will she say, “Oh I love the way you blew up! It just makes me honor you so much more!” You want your children to shape up? Does getting angry at them help them to improve? I think not. Stop and think before you speak.

6. Continually ask God to fill you with His Spirit.

Galatians 5:22,23 says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” — how do you get self-control? Not by reading a self-help book, not by pulling yourself up by your psychological bootstraps. God’s Spirit gives you the power to control yourself.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Ephesians 5:18 (Good News Bible) says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which will only ruin you; instead, be filled with the Spirit.” Paul compares getting drunk to being filled with the Spirit. What does it mean to be drunk? It means to be under the influence of alcohol. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? It means to be under the influence of God. It means allowing God to influence the way you think, the way you speak, the way you act.

Now if I take a tube of toothpaste and squeeze it real hard, what’s going to come out? You say, “Toothpaste.” Are you sure? Why did it come out? I put pressure on it.

Now, if you’re filled with anger, and you get squeezed by the world, then anger is going to spill out over everyone. And if you’re filled with the Holy Spirit and with God’s love, that’s what’s going to come out. If you’re filled with anger, almost anything will tick you off; but if you’re filled with the love of God, almost nothing can upset you, because what’s inside comes out.

Folks, anger is a normal human emotion. Jesus got angry. You ought to get angry sometimes. There are appropriate ways to get angry. It’s how you deal with your anger that is important -- learning to express it in a non-destructive way.

All of us have broken this Commandment in one way or another, maybe by insulting people, attacking their self-worth -- “Why did I ever marry you? You’re worthless.” Maybe you’ve committed murder by gossip -- destroying someone’s good name. The great thing is that God forgives even murder. Did you ever realize that God used three ex-murderers to write a significant part of the Bible? Moses had a terrible temper and he killed an Egyptian and buried his body in the sand. David killed Uriah so that he could marry Uriah’s wife. And the Apostle Paul called himself a murderer because he held the coats of those who murdered Stephen.

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. David wrote the Psalms. And Paul wrote those wonderful New Testament letters. God used these people who had a terrible temper, and He used them because they got their anger under control.