

LOVE IS NOT EASILY ANGERED

40 Days of Love – Part 5

Welcome to the fifth Sunday in our series “40 Days of Love!” I’m Pastor Chris Ireland and I want to thank Pastor Rolly for giving me this opportunity to preach. Pastor Rolly, you may think that YOU decided I would preach today, but I am convinced that God told you to let me preach this sermon today, because, first and foremost, I need this message. I have learned a lot as I prepared. This message originally was written and given by Pastor Rick Warren at Saddleback Church in October 2008. I have taken his message, and through God’s guidance, have personalized it for our church and our time. It’s a Rick Warren message with a Chris Ireland twist. We’re in verse 5 of 1 Corinthians 13 where the Bible says “*love is not easily angered.*” As I studied, it struck me how The Message reads “love isn’t always me first, doesn’t fly off the handle, doesn’t keep score of the sins of others.” Did you hear that...love doesn’t fly off the handle. I believe a lot of us look at anger and temper as the same thing. So let’s look at what God says about love and anger. Let’s pray.

A lot of people think anger is always a sin. Not necessarily. Sometimes anger is the most appropriate response. Actually, anger is a capacity given to you by God. God gets angry. There are some times that you should get angry. Sometimes anger is an evidence of love. If somebody hurt my wife, somebody hurt my daughter, I would get angry. In fact, if I didn’t get angry, it would mean I was just heartless. It would mean I would be apathetic.

The opposite of love is not anger; the opposite of love is apathy. Not caring. If you never get angry it means you’re a vegetable, not a human being. In Kingdom Hearts, you would be one of the nobodies. If you don’t know what I’m talking about...ask your kids; they’ll know.

The problem is not anger; the problem is whether it’s appropriately or inappropriately expressed. Managed anger is actually a good thing. It produces good marriages; it produces good leadership, good churches, good businesses and many other things.

What we typically do is we go to either one extreme or the other. Just because you don’t turn into Mount Pinatubo doesn’t mean you don’t have an anger problem. *You have an anger problem!* You do. I can give you a dozen different ways you manifest it and we’re going to talk about those today.

Typically, the two extremes are some people clam up when they get angry and other people blow up. Some people stuff it all inside and others let it all out. There’s a difference between the mute, keep it quiet type and the maniac, let it all out type. Everybody in life tends to be either a turtle or a skunk. When you get into conflict, if you’re a turtle, you pull your neck back in and you hide in your shell. On the other hand, if you’re a skunk, you just stink up the place. You spew all over and you let everybody know it.

Let me give you a few little facts about anger that you may not know:

- The average woman loses her temper three times a week, while the average man loses his temper about six times a week.
- Women more often get angry at people while men more often get angry at things; machines that break and stuff like that.
- Single adults express anger twice as often as married adults.

- Men are far more physical in their anger than women.
- You are more likely to express anger at home than anywhere else. *Duh!*

Successful marriages are not those marriages where anger or conflict does not exist, but rather it's where they've learned to manage it. When anger is managed, it produces great marriages and it produces great friendships and great businesses and great athletes and great leaders and all these different things.

If you have never taken notes, I beg you to take notes today. You were likely not taught this anywhere else...and we need to teach it to our kids; we need to teach it to our employees, we need to teach it to our students because we need to lower the anger level in our society. So how do we do it? There are six points I want to share with you today.

1. The first thing God says to do if you want to tame your temper is you must **resolve to manage it**.

What I mean by that is you quit saying "I can't control it!" and start realizing that you can.

Now, I struggled with this statement, because anger is an emotion; just like love, joy, sadness, surprise and fear. But I realized two things. First, I confused anger and temper. Anger is an emotion; temper is a manifestation of anger. The dictionary defines temper as an "outburst of anger."

The second thing I realized is that emotions can be controlled and managed. I joined the army in 1984 and the first place I went was to Ft. Bliss, TX for basic training. There are a lot of things you learn in basic, but one of them is learning how to manage fear...how to manage stress. So emotions can be managed and controlled.

In fact, you have far more control over your anger than you want to admit. Let me give you an example. When I was growing up, there was a lot of yelling in our house...a lot...and it was usually directed at me...and usually it was justified. I would break the rules or disobey...Yeah, me. And my mom would be yelling and screaming at me. She would be so upset, and then the phone would ring. You kids know what I'm about to say. She would answer it and I would hear her say "Hello? Oh, hi Betty. I'm doing fine. I was going to call you..." It used to drive me crazy when my mom did that! As a 14 year old kid, I wanted to say "Why don't you yell at her!"

What happened? She just turned on a dime. Anger is highly controllable. Don't tell me that you can't control it. You can change when you want to change. Anger can be managed.

The Bible says this in Proverbs 29:11 *"A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control."* Circle "keeps." Keeps means it's a choice. It's a responsibility. When I get angry, I'm choosing to get angry and I'm not blaming anybody else.

When I say "resolve to manage your anger," resolve means you make a choice in advance. The time to decide to manage your anger is not when your blood pressure is rising, your adrenaline is shooting into your system, your nerves are all on alert, you can feel the flush in your face and your muscles tense.

No, you've already lost the battle at that point.

You resolve to manage it in advance. Before I go into this meeting, before I open the door to home. You decide "Today, I'm not going to let it get to me; Today, I'm not going to fly off the handle." Resolve, decide in advance.

2. How you do this is **To remember the cost**.

When you remember the cost of uncontrolled anger, you will be more motivated to manage it. You're less likely to get angry if you realize that there's always a price tag to anger. The Bible is very, very specific

Proverbs 29:22 says *“A hot tempered man...gets into all kinds of trouble.”* You could go on and on about “all kinds.”

How many of you would agree from your own life the truth found in Proverbs 15:18 that *“Hot tempers cause arguments?”*

How about this truth found in Proverbs 14:29 that *“Anger causes mistakes?”*

How about this one found in Proverbs 14:17 *“People with hot tempers do foolish things?”* How many holes in walls, golf clubs thrown away, bats broken, speeding tickets received have happened in the “heat of the moment?”

Proverbs 11:29 says *“The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left.”* You always lose when you lose your temper. Write this down: “I always lose when I lose my temper!”

What do you lose? You lose your reputation. You can lose the respect of others. You can lose the love of your family. You can lose your health. When you say, “He’s such a pain in the...” and name your favorite body part, it’s true. When I swallow my anger, my stomach keeps score. Your body was not designed to handle anger. God didn’t mean for you to carry rage around inside of you. When you carry anger in you constantly, you get sick. There are all kinds of ailments people could get out of the hospital from if they weren’t carrying around guilt, resentment and anger.

We need to remember the cost whenever we’re tempted to lose our temper.

Parents in particular learn pretty quickly that you can scare kids into doing something by getting angry at them. We often will use anger to get people to do something. Why? Because it works...in the short term

But in the long run, there are always three price tags for anger. More anger, apathy, alienation. Whenever you get angry at someone, they don’t respond well. When people get angry at you, do you want to hang out with them? No.

Second, if they keep getting angry at you, pretty soon you just become apathetic and go “I can’t please them.” That’s what a lot of teenagers think about their parents; “I can’t please them, they’re always so angry.” So they become apathetic.

And if you keep getting angry, pretty soon to protect themselves, there comes alienation; the relationship is broken.

So you get the short term obedience from your anger; but in the long term, you destroy the relationship. You have to resolve to manage it and you do that by remembering the cost.

Here’s the third thing the Bible says...

3. Reflect before reacting

In other words, think before you speak. Put your mind in gear before you put your mouth in gear. Anger control is largely a matter of mouth control.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 29:11 *“A stupid man gives free reign to his anger; a wise man waits and lets it grow cool.”* Circle “waits.” He’s saying one of the greatest tools for anger management is delay. Just wait a minute.

Our third president, Thomas Jefferson, said that when you get angry, count to ten. When you get really angry, count to 100. There is wisdom in that.

Delay in responding is a great remedy to anger. But this is not delaying your response for a week, or a month or a year. In fact, the Bible says in Ephesians 4:26 *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger.”* In other words, don't carry anger from today over till tomorrow. If you hold on to your anger for more than 24 hours, anger turns to resentment; and resentment is always wrong. Anger is not always wrong, but resentment and bitterness is always a sin. What I'm saying is that if you are in an argument and it starts to get heated, it's o.k. to say *“Time out! Let's take a five minute break.”* Maybe you need to walk into another room or walk outside. You let the physical and physiological symptoms subside and come back and talk when you're a little bit calmer.

So the Bible tells us to reflect before reacting...what do you do during the delay?

You try to understand your anger. You analyze it. The Bible says in Proverbs 19:11 *“A wise man (a man's wisdom) gives him patience.”* What's ticking me off? What's irritating me? What's making me feel this way?

This is so important. The more you understand your anger, the more understanding you'll be. The more you understand yourself, and why you're upset, the more understanding you're going to be of yourself. *“A man's wisdom gives him patience.”*

So, there are three questions you need to ask when you're reflecting before reacting:

Why am I angry? You need to stop and ask yourself, what is making me so upset right now? The problem is not the problem; the problem is the cause of the problem. The problem is not your anger; anger is a symptom. Why am I angry?

Figure out which of the three root causes is causing your anger. Every time you get angry, it's one of these three things. *Always.* These root causes are hurt, frustration or fear.

The first thing that causes you to get angry is hurt. When you get hurt, either physically or emotionally, the natural human response is to get angry. If I'm out nailing a nail into some wood and I hit my thumb, my natural reaction is not to grieve over my painful thumb; I get mad...and in my case I usually start saying some less than glorifying words and throw the hammer. When you hurt, when you get hurt, you instinctively get angry. That's physically hurt and emotionally hurt. You need to understand this.

The second thing that causes you to get angry is frustration. Frustration is when you get irritated and you're thwarted toward a goal; when you're forced to wait. We've all seen this with young children. They can't have a toy, they can't eat candy before dinner, they can't stay at the playground a few more minutes. They get mad. What I'm saying here is frustration is caused when you feel out of control. When you feel out of control, you tend to get angry. Frustration. Trying to get kids to obey, trying to get your boss to listen to reason, trying to get that other person to see your point of view.

The third cause of anger is fear. This is whenever you feel threatened, whenever you feel trapped, whenever you feel attacked, whenever you feel afraid. Anger and insecurity always go together. The more insecure you are in life, the more prone to anger you're going to be in life. When you base your feelings about yourself and what other people think about you, you're going to get angry all the time. When people don't meet your needs, or when they say things that are unkind, or they don't respond the way you expect them to respond, or they're not as appreciative as you think they ought to be, you're going to get angry. Why? Because you're looking to other people to meet needs in your life that only God can meet.

This is so important to understand, because when somebody gets angry at you, try to look beyond the anger and see which of these things they are feeling. If somebody is angry at you, your response is to get angry back. We're not very sympathetic with anger.

A few years ago in youth ministry, there was a buzzword we used; history...His story. There were two aspects to history. His story was the message of God, the message of Jesus, the message of salvation. The second aspect to history was the people we know and met and served. Everybody has a story, a history, that made them who they are. If someone was a mean kid, a bully, there was a story in their life that made them act that way. If someone was apathetic, sullen or emo, there was a story in their life that made them act that way. If they were bitter, or angry, or acting out. We need to apply history to those people we get angry at. We need to listen to what's behind the anger.

Then here's what you pray. Psalm 141:3 says *"Lord, help me control my tongue; help me to be careful about what I say."* Some of these verses are so good you need to write them on little cards and memorize them this week. This a week for multiple memory verses. Because when you're angry, if you don't know the verse, it's not helpful.

I keep this little card here in my wallet called a cross in my pocket. It's a reminder to me of God's love and sacrifice every time I open my wallet. Some of you need to keep these verses in your wallet.

4. **Release my anger appropriately**

If anger were a sin, then God's a sinner because God gets angry...and God can't sin. God gets angry when He sees a rape. God get angry when He sees child abuse. God gets angry when He sees poor people ignored by rich people. God gets angry when He sees racial prejudice. God gets angry when He sees people ripping each other off and when He sees people being unfaithful to their husbands and wives. There are a lot of things in the world that are flat out evil; and you ought to get angry about those things, too. Anger is not a sin.

But I must release my anger appropriately. Ephesians 4:26 says *"If you become angry, don't let your anger lead you into sin."* It's all in how you release it.

The Bible says in Proverbs 15:1 *"A gentle answer quiets anger, but a harsh one stirs it up."* We all know this. Have you noticed that if you talk loud, the person next to you talks loud back? The louder you get, the louder they get? It escalates. So if you want to de-escalate anger in a relationship, talk low and slow; not loud and fast...low and slow. *"A gentle answer turns away wrath."* It quiets anger.

Whose anger does it quiet? First, it quiets your own. When you talk loud, it makes you angrier. When you talk low and slow, it makes **you** calmer before it even starts working on them.

So, what is the best way to release anger?

I need to tell you three ways that don't work, then God's way. You don't suppress it, you don't repress it, you don't express it; you confess it.

First, you don't suppress it. What does suppression mean? It means to stuff it all down and storing it up inside of you. When you store up your anger inside, it's like taking a coke bottle and shaking it up. It's eventually going to explode; and it's going to come out sideways. Sometimes in a relationship that's not even related to the person you're angry at. Suppressing it, pushing it down doesn't work. As I said earlier, if you don't talk it out, you take it out on your body. If you swallow your anger; your back, your neck, your stomach keep score...and it's going to come out in your body. So you don't suppress it.

The second thing you don't do is repress it. What does repression mean? Repression means denying you are angry. Repression is pretending you are not ticked off, pretending you are not irritated, pretending you are not mad at your husband or wife or mom or dad or son or daughter or boss. Repression is like that river in Egypt...denial.

There is a word for repressed anger. You know what repressed anger is? It's depression. Depression. One of the causes of depression is repressed anger. When you push anger down and pretend you are not angry, it causes you to become depressed. This depression is frozen rage. Rick Warren related the following story to his congregation in October 2008 about his engagement, marriage and depression.

When Rick and his wife Kay got married 36 years ago, they didn't know each other. They got engaged, and he moved to Japan and she moved to Birmingham, AL. They were apart their entire engagement. They got married and it was like, we love each other, but...who are you? They discovered after they got married that they were polar opposites. Opposite in every single cell of their body. He saw it this way, she saw it that way; he said high, she said low; he said why, she said I don't know. He says they were literally opposites. They started fighting **on their honeymoon!** In six months, their marriage had gone from bad to worse to hell on Earth. Both of them felt deeply disappointed. They thought, "What happened?" They were both in love with each other; they felt God had brought them together, but they were so different. The problem, according to Rick Warren, was they were just immature.

So here they are in their marriage and they were just miserable. They were too proud to go get counseling. They eventually did and it saved their marriage. But he says he remembers Kay saying that she thought she was going insane from the pressure. She thought she was losing her mind. Rick got so sick from swallowing and denying his anger that he ended up in the hospital, clinically depressed. He says he remembers the psychiatrist coming into his hospital room to see him. The guy looked just like Sigmund Freud and he thought "I am really in bad trouble!" He had a beard...he was German. All he needed was the pipe.

He looks at him lying there in his hospital bed and says "So, what are you angry about?" Rick says "I'm not angry, I'm depressed." He said "No, you're angry." Rick says "I am not angry, I'm depressed!" He said "You're angry. What are you angry about? You won't admit it, that's why you're depressed." Rick said "I'm not angry!" He said "Depression is frozen rage."

The truth was Rick was angry at Kay. He felt cheated; he felt disappointed. He felt it wasn't supposed to be this way.

They did get counseling, and the result is managed anger, and a happy marriage beyond their wildest dreams...and Saddleback Church, and [40 Days Of Purpose](#). As a side note, if you are in an unhappy relationship; if you are depressed...it can be better. Seek counseling. There are a lot of reasons people give to avoid counseling; stigma, I can't afford it, it won't help. Counseling does work. God instituted marriage and desires for you to experience the fullness of life He has made available to all of us. Seek that help.

The third thing you don't do is you don't express it. When you express your anger, you tend to create more. Anger expressed in inappropriate ways damages relationships.

We all have our favorite ways of expressing it, and they're all wrong. Some of you have a black belt in sarcasm. When somebody gets you angry, your tongue becomes kung-fu tongue. You're good at cold cuts. You get deli mouth. You're actually proud of it. "I'm so witty!" "Did you hear that zinger?" You're destroying the relationship with your sarcasm. You cut and cut and cut. That's no way to express anger.

Others of you are great at manipulation. Your motto is "Don't get mad, get even!" You figure out a way to manipulate and hurt and destroy that person behind the scenes who made you angry. You have a war plan that would make General Patton proud.

Others of you are Mt. Vesuvius. You just blow up. Hot lava pours out and flows all over.

Others of you think you are so self-righteous because you're the pouter when you get angry. Poor me. Mary Martyr. Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I'm going to go eat worms. You have a way of manipulating. Everybody in the family knows mom's pouting again, so everybody has to walk on eggshells. Because, as the old saying goes...unhappy wife, unhappy life.

None of these ways are appropriate; they are all wrong. Some people get angry, and they express it in crazy behavior. "My husband had an affair? Good, I'll have an affair!" Crazy behavior. It's like shooting yourself with a gun so you can hit him with the recoil.

"I'm going to go take some drugs...I'm going to go get drunk with some boys..." No. Don't.

So, if you don't suppress it, don't repress it, don't express it...what do you do?

God says the way you release your anger is to confess it. You let it out to God. You admit it first to yourself: I'm angry. And you admit it to God: "God, I'm mad!" You talk to God about it. You confess not just the anger, but the cause: "I'm hurt! I'm frustrated! I'm scared! I feel insecure! I feel this is out of control!" You admit the cause behind the anger. This is how you deal effectively with anger.

5. Re-pattern your mind

The Bible has a lot to teach about this. You change the way you think. The way you express your anger, you didn't learn that overnight. Somebody modeled it for you. Anger is a learned response; and you learned some bad things.

The good news is you can unlearn it. You don't have to stay that way. You can learn new habits.

The Bible says in Romans 12:2 "*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world.*" What's the behavior of this world? The behavior of this world is suppress, repress, express. One of those three. By the way, this is why violence in media is not a good thing. What the world teaches is, you got a problem? Use a gun. Angry? Get revenge. Destroy. Slice and dice.

Continuing in Romans 12:2 it says "*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way that you think.*" Circle "changing the way you think." This is the key to learning a new way to handle anger. Change the way you think.

When you act in angry ways, it's because you feel angry. When you feel angry, it's because you're choosing to think angry thoughts. Don't even think about the way you feel. Start by changing what you think. If you change that thought, that mental process, it's going to change your feeling and it's going to change your behavior. Romans 12:2 "*Be changed, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" That's what God does. He's the one who can change those thought patterns in your mind. To break the habit of anger, you have to get some mental reconditioning.

Here's an interesting thing: part of that reconditioning process means getting away from things that make you angry as much as possible. Proverbs 22: 24-25 says "*Keep away from angry, short tempered people, or you will learn to be like them...*" Anger is contagious. Take a nice kid and put him in a gang, in one year he'll be angry; take him out and he'll go back to his normal ways.

Now, I want all of you to listen to this. If you are dating somebody who has a problem with anger, as your pastor who loves you and cares about you, I'm telling you right now: stop dating them. For your own good and theirs. In fact, as your pastor who loves and cares about you, if you are engaged to someone who has an anger management problem, break off the engagement right now. The Bible says "*Don't associate with people of an angry temper.*"

That doesn't mean you don't love them. That doesn't mean you don't get back together at some point. But you need to use the leverage right now and say no. I know what some of you are thinking, "I'll change him." No. That's the old wedding philosophy. First, you walk down the aisle, then you stand at the altar, then you sing the hymn. Aisle-alter-hymn. A lot of girls think that. I'll alter him.

You cannot change anybody else. Stop trying. You can't change your kids, you can only change you. You can't change anybody else. Only until the fear of change is exceeded by the pain of not changing will they change.

What about in a marriage? If you're in a marriage that is abusive right now, God does not expect you just to keep accepting that physical abuse. He doesn't. I don't believe in divorce, but I do believe in separation for the purpose of reconciliation. If you are in an abusive relationship right now, you need to get out of that relationship at this moment for your own good. If your kids are in an abusive relationship, you get them out this moment. I'm not saying divorce them, but I am saying get out of that relationship so that God can put some pressure on that person to start working in their life. That's why I say, you change.

This is the shameful secret in millions of American homes. Last year, four million wives were beaten by husbands who didn't know how to control their anger. Last year, ten million children in America were beaten by parents who didn't know how to control their anger. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:29 *"If you exploit or abuse your family, you will end up with a fistful of air."* The Bible also says in Colossians 3:19 *"You husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly."* Want to get God angry at you? Pick on somebody and watch what happens. THIS HAS GOT TO STOP!

6. Rely on God's help.

Good anger management is not going to be solved by a quick visit to Oprah, or reading a self-help book or taking a seminar. The real secret is God's power to change you on the inside. Romans 15:5 says *"Patience and encouragement come from God. I pray God will help you to agree with each other, the way Christ Jesus wants."* Your relationship and closeness with Jesus Christ will determine the amount of patience you have in your life. Whatever is inside of you is going to come out when you're squeezed. If you take a tube of toothpaste and squeeze it, what comes out? You say, toothpaste; not quite true. It could say "toothpaste" on the outside, but whatever is in it is what's going to come out when you put on the squeeze.

Tension and temper go together. Pressure and anger go together. If you are filled with anger on the inside, when you get jostled or squeezed, almost anything can make you angry. However, if you're filled with God's love, almost nothing can make you angry, to lose your temper, to get out of gear.

How does God manage my anger? The Bible says in Galatians 5:22 *"The fruit of the Spirit is patience."* In other words when God's Spirit is in me, He fills me with love and joy and peace and patience.

How does God help me with my bad habit of anger? He goes straight to the heart of the problem; and the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart. It starts in the heart.

The Bible says in Matthew 12:34 *"Whatever is in your heart determines what you will say."* You see, the problem is not in my tongue, it's in my heart. My mouth just betrays what I'm really like inside

Find somebody with a harsh tongue, a cutting tongue, it reveals an angry heart. Find somebody with a negative tongue, they have a fearful heart. Find somebody with a boasting tongue, you know they have an insecure heart. Find somebody with a judgmental tongue, you know they have a guilty heart. Find somebody with a critical tongue, always critical and nagging, and they have a bitter heart. Find somebody with a filthy tongue, you know they have an impure heart.

On the other hand, if you find somebody who's always encouraging, they have a happy heart. Find someone who always speaks in a gentle way, they have a loving heart. Someone who always loving and controlled in their words, you know they have a peaceful heart.

What we need is a heart transplant. We need a new heart. David says in Psalm 51:10 *"Create in me a clean heart, O God."* That's what we need to say today: God, I need a clean heart. I need a heart transplant. Ezekiel 26:26 says *"I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I'll remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that's God-willed, not self-willed."*

Jesus can replace a hurting heart and all that pain with a sense of His love. Maybe you have been beaten and abused and rejected and unloved. God says, I care about your pain. It matters to Me. I will help you in the healing. In fact, God says in Psalm 9:12 *"I cannot ignore the cries of the afflicted."*

If your heart is crying out on the inside, maybe it's because you have never received, fully received, the warmth and security of Jesus Christ. Now is your opportunity. Let today be that day.

Let's pray...