



The Weight Room: ***Anger***



PREVIEW

God has a special plan for every one of us. He said in Jeremiah 29:11 (NET), "I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope." However, it's normal for us to struggle with God's promises. Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:1 (ESV), "Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." These lessons are designed to help us overcome the "weights" in our lives so we can live our lives fully committed to the cause of Christ.

PRAISE

Play the M&M Anger Game. Have members of your P7 Club choose a random M&M from a small bowl of M&Ms. (Be sure to have everyone wash their hands before they choose their piece of candy.) Each person's response will depend upon the color of M&M they choose:

Red—tell us one thing that makes you angry.

Brown—show us how you breathe when you are angry.

Green—tell us one activity that calms you down when you are angry.

Yellow—tell us one thing that makes you excited.

Blue—tell us one poor choice you made when you were angry and what you could have done differently.

Orange—tell us a good choice you made when you were angry.

PARABLE

We all are going to get angry. (You may have walked into this meeting angry.) Your parents get angry. Your siblings get angry. Your pastor gets angry. I get angry. We all get angry! (Read Eph. 4:26.) Based on what we just read, it's okay to get angry, but it's not okay to sin while we are angry. Simpler said than done, right? Paul wasn't exhorting people to get angry, as if anger were a good motivator or impetus for positive action. (This is the kind of thing that many psychologists and "pop psychologists" teach in today's culture.) The context of Ephesians 4:25–32 is exactly the opposite! The gist of Paul's message is when you feel angry, don't act on it! Don't hold on to anger, and don't let it goad you to action, because that easily leads to unwholesome talk and other sins. It gives the devil a foothold in your life. It grieves the Holy Spirit. It harms you and others. Instead of getting angry at people, Paul taught that we should be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32, NIV).

PRESENT

Simply stated, we are not called to avoid anger but to properly manage its unavoidable presence in our lives. As we said before, everyone gets angry—and guess what? Even Jesus got angry. Anger is an amoral emotion. (“Amoral” means it’s neither right nor wrong.) So where does sin enter the picture? It’s what is generating the anger that we must guard against, because the mindset behind the anger makes it right or wrong. (Read Matt. 21:12–13.) Jesus became so upset He made a whip out of cords and drove all the animals from the Temple, then turned over tables and spilled the “filthy lucre” all over the floor. This deep source of righteous anger stemmed from genuine concern about God’s business. What was intended for spiritual use (sacrifice and prayer) was now being used for underhanded gain. Righteous anger is led by the Holy Spirit and is concerned with God’s business. Conversely, sinful anger is selfish and concerned with pleasing the flesh.

If you take care of God’s business, He will take care of your business. If you mishandle God’s business, you may spend years full of anger and resentment toward everyone, including God, because some things are not going to work out for you the way you want them to. There’s also a chance that you’ll confuse God’s business with your own business. When you help others more than you try and help yourself, you will automatically fall in alignment with God’s business.

Remember through Jesus you are a victor, not a victim. Anger often results from wounds; someone hurts us—a friend, a family member, a teacher, a fellow student—and we vengefully want them to get what they deserve as if we’re better than they are. But look at how Jesus calls us to respond to those who hurt us.

PRACTICE

(Read Matt. 5:44.) Jesus exemplified this principle by sacrificing His life on the cross. He could have snapped His fingers and killed every soldier who was torturing Him. He could have called thousands of angels to come His rescue, but He wasn’t focused on rescuing Himself; He was focused on rescuing us. His righteous anger toward evil fueled Him to overlook His flesh-centered business, and He took care of God-centered business at the highest level.

It is crucial that you identify wounds in your life and invite Jesus to bring healing. It may not be an overnight process; it may take prayer, journaling, and conversations with leaders in your life. But instead of giving up, I pray that you chose to trust the process because it has the power to change your life forever.

PRAY

Jesus, You have given us power to overcome anger. Let us learn how to successfully navigate through times of anger. Help us not to wound others when we are angry, but please give us grace and mercy for the times when we do get angry and sin. Jesus, please remind us today of Your sacrifice for us. You did not let moments of fleshly frustration cause you to be distracted from the purpose of saving us. So, Lord, help us to not hurt people who have hurt us, but give us the grace to forgive them as You forgave us. In Jesus' name, amen.

PLUS

If time allows, discuss possible scenarios when it is okay and not okay to get angry and how to successfully navigate that anger.