

Making Our Faith Work
Making faith work in anger
Part 4

Intro: When was the last time you got angry? Hopefully it wasn't today already. If it was, that's OK. Anger happens. When anger does happen, some people try to hide it, internalize it, try to keep it all tucked in while others are a bit more expressive in their anger. When they get angry, everyone knows.

- Story of being in Yellowstone on vacation
- I had a basketball coach in HS like this. Share story about half-time

This story may be a bit extreme, but many of you have been on the receiving end of someone's anger like this. (A parent – boss – co-worker – teacher – coach)

Anger is expressed in a variety of ways. Some people seem to have much longer tolerances before they express anger. Some people seem to have very short fuses.

As followers of Jesus, it is essential we learn how to govern and manage our emotions. If we do not, our emotions control our lives instead of Jesus. We become followers of feeling rather than followers of Christ. Anger is definitely one of the emotions we have to figure out what to do with. James addresses the issue of anger to his readers.

James 1:19-21 "Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰ Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. ²¹ So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls." (NLT = New Living Translation)

Today we are going to explore how do we make our faith work even in anger? Let me give you 5 ways.

1. Anger is a normal emotion

- God gets angry – When we read the OT, we see God getting angry at times with the nation of Israel. Their continual refusal to follow God's ways after His repeated demonstrations of His presence and power often created anger in God. I know many people only see God's anger in the OT but it is filled with His mercy and love as well.
- Jesus got angry – Times Jesus got angry – John 11 at Lazarus's death

John 11:33 “When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.” (NLT)

Driving merchants from temple / The religious leaders – calling them a brood of vipers and white washed tombs. This was not a pleasant exchange.

- We get angry – blocked goals – mean people – the unfairness of life – losing a sense of control over circumstances – sometimes I get angry over others actions.
 - Story of almost getting T-boned going to lunch in Sunnyside – waitress lecturing me on “primary emotions”.
- Anger in itself is not sinful. Sometimes, anger is the appropriate response. Sometimes I wonder if the followers of Jesus don’t get angry enough over some things in the world. (Injustice – damaging effects of sin – Satan’s work – evil)
- Anger must be understood and managed otherwise it can be very destructive. It will be destructive in our relationships with others and God. It can cause our faith to not work. Anger damages our witness to others – our children – marriages- friendships – jobs and futures.
- Anger should come with a warning label. “Handle with Care”. Anger can be a very toxic substance. How do we manage anger so that our faith works?

2. Seek understanding rather than assuming

“You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry”

- For all you short-fused people out there this is for you. No more excuses about getting angry quickly. God’s word is very clear. We need to be SLOW to get angry. But how?
- By developing the skill to seek understanding first rather than assuming. We fuel our anger by assuming intentions, motives, and thinking in others. Last time I checked we do not have the same ability God does to know the thoughts and intentions of the heart. BUT we like to think we do.
- This is the essence of what judging another person is all about. We are judging the unseen – the thoughts, motives and intentions of the heart. When Jesus commands us not to judge others, this is what He is talking about. When we do judge others in this way, it fuels our anger.

- Here is something that has helped me over the years as I have worked on anger in myself. Before I lash out, I try to seek understanding first. I say things like; “Help me understand what you meant...why you said...why you did...help me understand what you were trying to accomplish?”
- By asking questions first it slows our emotions down and protects us from our natural fight – flight response. If this is triggered, higher reasoning begins to shut down. This is why being quick to listen and slow to speak is so important. God knows how we are designed.
- This also allows you to gain understanding. Often, when we understand the why behind things, we can let go of the malicious intent we want to assign to others.
- We all have a fleshly tendency to demonize people when we are angry. This is a pattern we must break if our faith is going to work. Some of you are very quick to assign character and motives to people even though you know very little of what really is going on. Maybe it is time to begin seeking understanding.
- How can you practice being more quick to listen...and slower to speak out in your anger. How can you slow your emotions down by seeking understanding?
 - This one skill alone can save your marriage – friendship – your job -

3. Understand that fleshly anger hinders your faith

“Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.”

- Not all anger is what some call “righteous anger”. Most often it is fleshly anger. It’s immature anger. It’s the kind of anger that is destructive if not managed correctly. This is the anger that is damaging your faith.
- Fleshly anger is an indicator you struggle with your faith and trust in God. It indicates you struggle trusting God with circumstances beyond your control. Maybe you struggle trusting God with people you can’t control. Either way, it is a faith issue. This anger is making your faith not work.
- Anger also hinders your witness for Jesus. Angry Christians do a lousy job representing Jesus to this fallen world. If we are to be ambassadors for Christ, how are we representing Him to others?
 - Are we angry when they get our order wrong?
 - Are we angry when we’re out in public (getting gas – groceries – driving)

- Do our kids see us angry all the time? Parents, PLEASE do not pass on anger to your kids. Do not allow this to be a generational sin! Explain.
- Do our co-workers see us angry all the time? Angry people make poor teammates.
- James wants his readers to understand that this human, fleshly anger is not going to accomplish anything good for the Kingdom of God. It cannot accomplish the righteous life God desires in us.
- You cannot use anger to control, manipulate, and influence people or circumstances. The results will not be Kingdom results. They will be fleshly results. The Bible tells us that the results of the flesh are death (explain)
- When Jesus said to seek the kingdom of God above all else and His righteousness, this is impossible to do as angry people.
- For some of you the barrier in your relationship with God right now just might be your anger. He is asking you today to trust Him with all that is creating the anger in your life (job – marriage – kids – politics – economy – crazy drivers) HOW?

4. Deny your flesh and humble yourself before God's Word

“So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.”

- I love how blunt James is. This is not a PC type of book. I guess this is why I love it. The filth and evil he is talking about is in the context of anger. Our fleshly anger is part of the filth we need to rid ourselves of. HOW?
- Stop telling yourself you have a right to hang on to your anger. It's this belief that is fueling the anger every day in your very soul and destroying your faith. Basically, you are telling yourself you have a right to be toxic, mean, unforgiving, judgmental and filled with hatred for others. This is the path of anger. Jesus said anger leads to murder!
- We cannot allow our emotions to be the authority of our lives. This is a message our generation desperately needs right now. Out of control emotions are destroying lives, marriages, communities and churches.

- For the follower of Jesus, the Word of God must become the authority of our lives. We must humbly accept the Word of God. We must allow God to plant it in our hearts. God's word must have greater influence over our lives than our anger. HOW?
 - Confess the sin of anger to God. (Denying our flesh begins by confessing it to God.
 - Ask God daily to help you overcome your anger. Do not try to overcome a fleshly impulse with more fleshly impulse. You need God's power not yours.
 - Humbly accept God's word. Go and discover how God's word talks about anger. Go to Proverbs – Hot-tempered people are called fools. Memorize verse – put scripture on 3x5 cards – Get specific scriptures in your head. Go learn what it means to be spirit-filled (love-joy-peace-patience – kindness, etc...)

5. Process your anger daily

Ephesians 4:26-27 “And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” (NLT)

There are three very important truths from this verse regarding anger I want to leave you with this today.

- The sin of anger is in its control over you
 - Once again, anger is not the sin. The sin is anger's control over your life and emotions. Once you are angry, what are you doing with it? Are you stoking the fire? Are you assigning motives and thinking? Are you demonizing someone? Are you lashing out in anger at others? Are you destroying relationships? This is the sin.
 - As you evaluate your own emotions and anger, the question you must be asking is how much is anger controlling you? The question is not do you get angry. The question is about control.
 - You may even want to involve those that are very close to you to get an objective opinion. How do others see you?
- Don't allow yourself to stay angry

“Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry”

- Anger takes time to process. Therefore, prioritize the processing. Do not live in denial or tell yourself you will think about it later. Remember, anger is toxic. If you let it settle in your heart it stays there. This is why we don't go to bed angry – don't let the sun go down while you're angry.
- Even righteous anger is not good for you to hang on to. Anger is not meant to be clung to. We have to unload it – process it – deal with it.
- How do we process anger? 4 A's of anger
 - **Admit** – to yourself and God your anger. It's OK to pray to God while you're angry. In fact, it may be the best time for you to pray. This can be a great pressure valve. Better to unload on God than someone else.
 - **Accept** – the situation / people you can't control / circumstances you can't control. Often anger is a result of these things. This doesn't mean you like it; it simply means you will walk through it.
 - **Avoid** - assigning character or motives to people. You refuse to demonize people. You will take your thoughts captive.
 - **Acknowledge** - God's sovereignty over everything – even the things that create anger in you. Trust God and His word.

You might be thinking, “this is a lot of work.” Yes, but it's worth it.

- Fleshly anger gives Satan opportunities in your life
 - Angry people are spiritually vulnerable people. Anger somehow gives Satan an open door into our lives to create footholds. What is a foothold? It is a place in your life where the enemy creates engrained thinking and behaviors in order to control you.
 - Some of you have given the enemy a foothold in your life because of your anger. Because you believe you are justified in hanging on to it, the enemy has found an open door into your life and he is creating havoc in your heart – emotions – behaviors – relationships – marriage.
 - Your anger might be justifiable, but is it worth giving Satan an open door into your life? Hanging on to anger comes at a price. Is it worth this price?

Anger is something we are all going to experience. This broken world will give us plenty of opportunity to be angry. The issue is what will we do with it? Will we allow it to control us or will we learn to control it?

Jesus is here today wanting to help your faith work even in your anger. How does He want you to trust Him today? How does He want you to grow today dealing with your anger?

Prayer