

Anger Part I | Family Worship Guide

Matthew 5:21-22



MAIN IDEA:

Christ calls us to be extreme in our efforts to flee from anger/sin and pursue righteousness.

PREPARATION:

Create a line on the floor -- you can use tape, a jump rope, anything will do! Back up approximately 10 ft from this line and create a starting line. While standing on the starting line, attempt to throw an object (ball, bean bag, etc) at the line across from you without touching it or crossing it. Allow everyone 2-3 tries. See who is able to get the closest. If your object touches the line or crosses the line you are disqualified.

How difficult was it to get your object as close to the line as possible without touching or crossing it?

What if our goal was to keep your object as far away from the line as possible without touching or crossing it? Would that make the game easier or harder?

EXPLANATION:

The goal of this passage is to expound on the passage directly before it, in which Jesus tells the reader that they need to be MORE righteous than the Pharisees and scribes in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 20). The audience at the time would have understood that this would be an impossible task. In verses 21-22, Christ aims to shift the mindset of the listener from the idea of following the exact letter of the law (Thou shall not murder - Exodus 20:13) to the idea of fleeing as far from sin as possible. The Pharisees saw the law as a line, not to be crossed. They were concerned with the outward appearance of breaking the law. Christ wanted listeners to shift their focus toward pursuing righteousness, and obeying the law with their hearts. God is concerned with our hearts, and tells us that out of the overflow of our hearts the mouth speaks (Lk 6:45). Jesus called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, because they looked good on the outside, but many were rotten and dead on the inside. Unlike the Pharisees who were concerned with making sure they looked good on the outside, Jesus made the point that sinful hearts have sinful thoughts. Without Jesus replacing our sinful record with his own blameless record, we too would be seen as sinner. Jesus is our righteousness.

In verse 22 we see the effects of allowing anger to grow unchecked in our hearts, leading to how that impacts our worship and offerings in verses 23-26. (Anger turns into insults and attacks on character, which divide the family of God and do not represent Him.) If we allow ourselves to harbor anger it will continue to grow into outward manifestations (such as murder). The Bible calls us to "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Eph 4:31). All sin, whether visible from the outside, like the sin the Pharisees focused on, or internal, like the sin Jesus focused on, separates us from God.

CONVERSATION:

- Is Jesus saying that actual murder and anger towards someone have the same consequences?
- Is anger a sin?
- How close can we get to "crossing the line" of sin and still call ourselves righteous?
- In light of this passage, is "crossing the line" an appropriate way to think about anger/sin?

APPLICATION:

- When you know the anger in your heart is unrighteous, what is the appropriate course of action?
- How can we recognize and deal with sins of the heart that others may not see?

SUPPLICATION:

Father, give us a desire to flee from all sin, whether it's sin others can see or quiet sins in our hearts, immediately. Help us to seek your wisdom when dealing with anger towards others.

EXULTATION:

Nothing But the Blood of Jesus, by Robert Lowry 1876.

1. *What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*
 - *Refrain:
Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*
2. *For my pardon, this I see,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*
3. *Nothing can for sin atone,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
Naught of good that I have done,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*
4. *This is all my hope and peace,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

Anger Part II | Family Worship Guide

Matthew 5:23-26



MAIN IDEA: We honor God when we model unity within the church family by apologizing, forgiving, and making amends with one another before we commune with God.

PREPARATION:

Discuss a time when someone was hurtful toward you and then apologized. Did you feel any different after the apology?

EXPLANATION:

God's desire is that the church body on earth should be a glimpse of heavenly worship, and as such He desires for us to worship Him in unity with our brothers and sisters. (1 Cor 1:10, Jn. 13:35) If we are angry with a brother or sister, or know that we have wronged them, Jesus tells us to make this right before we continue with our offering (Mt. 5:24). Jesus instructs us to maintain right relationships in our hearts and in the church before we demonstrate outwardly our commitments to him with offerings. Before we present an offering to God, we should take time for reflection to remember how Christ forgave us, and to respond to the Holy Spirit if we need to confess sin. We are called to model the love and forgiveness of Christ with everyone in the world, including Christians. The Bible tells us there are many kinds of offerings, including giving of our finances, singing songs, and living our lives in service to God. To knowingly try to worship or make an offering to God with sin in our hearts will bring on discipline from God. (Rom 12:1) Most importantly, sin such as harboring anger with one another separates us from God.

This passage follows immediately after Jesus explains that he is the fulfillment of the law. (Mt. 5:17) We cannot fulfill the law on our own, so we need Jesus to do that for us (Rom. 3:9). God hates rituals for the sake of tradition. To make an offering without attempting to be reconciled to our brothers is just a religious tradition, and does not bring honor to God because God looks at our hearts. The heart of the offering is one of the key take-aways from the first offering story we have in the Bible about the offerings of Cain and Abel. (Genesis 4:4-5). To harbor anger between one another makes our worship displeasing to God. We are to model reconciliation to one another in the same way that Christ has reconciled us to Himself (Col. 3:13). We should keep a short record of wrongs, making amends as quickly as possible. (1. Cor. 13:5) Stories of debt and debt forgiveness like the story of the unmerciful servant (Mt. 18:21-35) permeate the Bible. Jesus is telling us that we should be quick to forgive, as we have been forgiven much. Christ paid our debt. (Titus 2:14, 1 Jn 2:2) Jesus tells us when demonstrating the model prayer to ask God to "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Mt. 6:12) We honor God when we model unity within the church family by apologizing, forgiving, and making amends with one another before we commune with God.

CONVERSATION:

- Can you share a time that you were angry at someone (or something) and it affected your thoughts and behavior?
- Why do you think anger is the first issue Jesus addresses after discussing the law in the Sermon on the Mount?
- What is the difference between righteous anger and the anger discussed in this passage?

APPLICATION:

- Is there someone you need to forgive?
- Is there someone from whom you need to ask forgiveness and make amends?

SUPPLICATION:

Heavenly Father, we know you rule the universe, thank you for sending Jesus to forgive our sins. Soften our hearts to treat others with patience and love. Forgive us when we are quick to anger, and help us to forgive those who have hurt us.

EXULTATION:

Consider reading aloud and meditating on the words of the following hymn.

May the Mind of Christ, my Savior – Kate Wilkinson (1925)

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
live in me from day to day,
by his love and pow'r controlling
all I do and say.*

*May the Word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his pow'r.*

*May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in ev'rything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.*

*May the love of Jesus fill me
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self abasing:
this is victory.*

*May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.*

*May his beauty rest upon me
as I seek the lost to win,
and may they forget the channel,
seeing only him.*