

Rich Humphrey  
**SESSION 6 | How to Get Better**

**I. WE MUST THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT OUR ANGER**

“You and I must become Christians with respect to our angers.”

David Powlison

**II. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE OF OUR ANGER**

**James 4:1, 2** - *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

*“So, why do you fight? Notice that James does not say, ‘You are fighting because the other person is a blockhead; because your hormones are raging; because the demon of anger took up residence... because your core needs are not being met; because you woke up on the wrong side of the bed and had a bad day at work. Instead, James says, you fight because of “your desires that battle within you.” You want something and don’t get it. The biblical analysis is straightforward and cuts to the core. **You fight for one reason; because you aren’t getting what you want.**”*

David Powlison

*“Take a moment and consider the desires at work when you get irritated or angry. What do you want? How do you organize your life around what you want? Are you playing God? Ask the questions straightforwardly. Look for something tangible: “What exactly do you want right now that makes you warlike when Christ’s rule would make you peaceable? Answer honestly and you will have identified why you participate in sinful conflict. There are no deeper reasons for your sinful anger.*

David Powlison

### **III. GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE**

**James 4:6-10** - <sup>6</sup>But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." <sup>7</sup>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup>Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

*"There is grace for the humble. Grace for those who ask for it. Instead of confessing other's sins, you can confess your own. Instead of proudly proclaiming your own righteousness, you can confess your many sins, failings, and weaknesses, and ask for grace. Instead of railing against God when you don't get what you want, you can submit yourself to God and draw near to Him. The wonderful result is that God will lift you up. God himself will show you favor. He will begin to change you at the deepest level."*

**David Powlison**

#### Fruit of Gospel-driven humility

- You will keep your mouth shut when you used to blurt out a reaction
- You will listen, when you used to be busy crafting a comeback
- You will examine your own heart based on what the other person said rather than lashing back at them with their own sin
- You will speak calmly rather than with gusts of inflammatory emotion
- Your words of correction to others will be grace filled and designed to edify rather than to hurt
- You will overlook an issue you used to explode over
- You will solve a problem rather than attacking the person
- You will replace harsh words that stir up anger with gentle answers
- You will expect to see Christ at work in the situation

## **IV. EIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY**

The first four questions help you take apart and make sense of your anger. The second four lead you to find help, moving you in a constructive direction. Working through these eight questions will help you understand yourself. They will help you find God in the midst of an angry moment.

**David Powlison**

### **Eight Questions**

1. What is my situation?
2. How do I react?
3. What are my motives?
4. What are the consequences?
5. What is true?
6. How do I turn to God for help?
7. How could I respond constructively to my situation?
8. What are the consequences of faith and obedience?

## **CASE STUDY #1**

John was a pastor at a small church. Saturdays were high stress days for him. He always seemed to have some last-minute preparation for the Sunday service he was scrambling to accomplish. On Sunday mornings, he would be up before dawn, running through his sermon. He was the first to arrive at the church and would cheerfully greet everyone as they walked in the door. The day was intense, filled with responsibilities and people. He'd talk, listen attentively, express care and concern, try to help, and pray.

John would finally get home around 2:00, grab a bite to eat, make some phone calls, and be back at church by 5:00 for the evening service. He would finally get home around 8:00. All that was on his mind watch catching the Sunday night football game, sipping on a tall glass of guava juice and nibbling on a handful of Fig Newtons. His wife Susie supported him through week after week of the same routine. She prayed for him as he prepared. She bore with his preoccupation with his ministry throughout the weekend. She waited and watched as he endlessly spoke with others after church.

Finally, when Sunday night arrived, she was excited to finally have an opportunity to converse with her husband; to talk intimately and personally. After watching him connect so patiently with others all day, she couldn't wait to tell him how her weekend went, how she was doing, and to plan out the week ahead. The result was predictable. A weekly quarrel. She would ask him questions about his day. He would only give single word answers. She would press harder and he would curtly tell her she was interrupting the game. She would become tearful and ask why he was more concerned about the people at church than he was his own wife. He would snap back asking her if she knew how incredibly tired he was. And on it went...

- 1. What was the source of the conflict between John and Susie? What was it that the two of them wanted?**
  
- 2. Where the things the two of them wanted bad things? If not, why did they lead to anger and conflict?**
  
- 3. How could looking at this situation through the lens of James 4:1-3 change:**
  - a. John's thoughts about this situation?**
  
  - b. Susie's thoughts about this situation?**

## **CASE STUDY #2**

**Remember our frustrated shoppers, Taylor and Maddie?** When we last observed them, Maddie had found the perfect couch but Taylor felt the price was too much. She didn't understand how he wouldn't want this couch and was nagging and insistent. That day's conflict was on the heels of a prior disagreement where Maddie opposed Taylor's dream purchase of season tickets to the Reds. A sense of unity and joy was deteriorating in their marriage and it concerned them both. They both had a sense that they needed help.

In God's kindness, their local church began to host a class on the topic of anger. In this class, Taylor and Maddie began to see the seriousness of anger, what it revealed about their hearts, and the power of the gospel to expose and transform them. They felt hope, but it was all still so theoretical.

Yesterday provided a fresh opportunity and test for this young couple. For a fun day out, they decided to visit the nearby outlets. Taylor knew that Maddie's favorite furniture store was there and that made him nervous. But, man did he want to spend his time in the Vans store — "second pair 50% off!"

As they walked in the furniture store, Taylor was tense, still leery from the previous argument. Sure enough, a couch immediately caught Maddie's eye. "Don't you just love it?" she said. Taylor felt the anger begin to rise as he glanced at the price tag. But, rather than exploding, he stopped and said, "It is a nice coach, why do you like that one the most?" She joyfully went on about the fabric, the contemporary style, and how it's color perfectly matched their décor. Then she asked if they could buy it.

Taylor swallowed hard and said, "I'll tell you what. Let's sit down and go home and discuss it. I know you want it. Maybe we can save each month in our budget until you can afford it." Maggie was blown away! Her heart was instantly stirred for her husband. "I don't know," she said. "the couch would be nice, but I know the Reds tickets are important to you as well! Maybe we should get them instead..."

- 1. Where do you see God's grace at work in Taylor and Maggie?**
- 2. What was different between this episode and the last one?**
- 3. Why did Maggie respond the way she did with an offer to buy the Red's tickets?**
- 4. How did a willingness to deal with their desires change the way they responded?**

## **CASE STUDY #3**

As I was preparing for the first lesson in this study on anger, I got angry! It was Thursday night and I was feeling (self-imposed) pressure to get the lesson and class notes finished up.

I asked Catherine to proofread what I had written. But, just as I did, all of our kids, one after the other, came into our room with questions, conflicts, and miscellaneous stuff that required Catherine's attention. They kept her focus long enough that when they were done, bedtime had come, and my lesson did not get proofed. Right before everyone went to bed, I left the room and just loud enough for everyone to hear I muttered, "I'm never going to get this thing done."

The way I expressed my anger was subtle, but the anger was real.

How would you answer these eight questions about my anger?

- 1. What was my situation?**
- 2. How did I react?**
- 3. What were my motives?**
- 4. What were the consequences? (You can speculate on what they would be.)**
- 5. What was true?**
- 6. How should I have turned to God for help?**
- 7. How could I have respond constructively to my situation?**
- 8. What would have been the consequences of faith and obedience?**