

The Gift of Anger

On Sunday we resumed sermon series on “Managing Our Moods” by pondering how we should respond when we feel angry.

1. Warm-up Question: How was anger handled in your family of origin?
2. We began Sunday’s sermon with a pop quiz – one question, multiple choice: Which of the following options comes closest to describing how you viewed anger before Sunday’s sermon? (Explain your answer.)
 - a. Anger is a sin.
 - b. Anger is a gift.
 - c. Anger is a destructive force.
 - d. Anger is a creative force.
3. Actually, for most of us, anger is a little bit of each of the foregoing. In short, anger is complicated.
 - a. Tell us about a time in your life when anger was a destructive force.
 - b. Tell us about a time in your life when anger was a positive creative force, motivating you or someone else to make positive change.
4. When Jesus cleansed the temple, he illustrated how anger can be a positive force in our lives. Read Mark 11:11-19.
 - a. Verse 11 indicates that Jesus inspected the temple on the first evening he arrived in Jerusalem. He saw everything that was happening in the temple, including the commerce occurring in the outer courtyard. Why do you think Jesus didn’t do anything that evening?
 - b. Verses 12-14 indicate that Jesus was tense and on edge as he returned to Jerusalem the next morning. Why do you suppose he was in such a bad mood?
 - c. Two forms of commercial activity were occurring in the outer courtyard of the temple. Some merchants were selling sacrificial animals to pilgrims arriving to celebrate the Festival of the Passover. Other merchants were exchanging money, trading Roman currency for temple currency, since it was considered offensive to purchase sacrificial animals with Roman currency. If you were to depict what Jesus did in verses 15-16 in a movie scene, how would you present it? What was Jesus’ demeanor and tone of voice? How did people react to what he was doing? What was the atmosphere in the temple after Jesus’ action?
 - d. The outer court of the temple was called the Court of the Gentiles because anybody could enter the outer court, even Gentile unbelievers and “unclean” Jews, to pray or meditate. Anybody, even religious rejects, could come into the

outer court. The practical effect of allowing money changers and animal sellers to operate in the outer court was to leave no room for religious outcasts to come to pray. That's why in verse 17 Jesus emphatically declared, "My house shall be a house of prayer for all people." Why do you think it made Jesus so angry that religious outcasts had no space in the temple?

- e. Given what Jesus did in the temple, is it wrong for us today to attack property or disrupt commerce while engaging in civil disobedience?
5. When God finished creating us humans, God said, "It is good." As part of our creation design, God gave us emotions. Therefore, emotions are good. Anger is one of those emotions. So anger is a gift from God. But any good gift can be misused.
- a. Jeff compared anger to other good gifts (like sex or fire) that, if not managed well, can become destructive. How is anger like sex or fire?
 - b. If anger is a gift, does that mean it's ok to express anger even against God, like the Sally Fields' character does in *Steel Magnolias*? What might have happened to the Sally Fields' character if she had bottled up her anger inside?
 - c. In your own life, have you ever suppressed anger? How did that affect you?
6. Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry, but do not sin. . . ." This is a positive exhortation to honestly embrace our anger, coupled with a cautionary warning to manage our anger well. What might that look like? Jeff suggested a three-step process.
- a. **Step 1 – Give your anger to God.** In other words, acknowledge that you need God's guidance to manage your anger well. Tell us about something in your life right now that makes you angry that you need God's help to manage well.
 - b. **Step 2 – Take a sacred pause to figure out what God wants you to do with your anger.** Depending on the situation, this may mean pausing for a moment, five minutes, a day, or a month. It's critical to consider, what is God trying to accomplish through the anger I feel? Is God trying to change me, change somebody else, or change the situation? In the scenario you just mentioned in Step 1 above, do you think God wants you to act to change yourself, to change somebody else, or to change the situation?
 - c. **Step 3 – Turn your anger into productive action aimed at creating positive change.** What might that look like in the situation you mentioned above?
7. How has your understanding of anger changed or evolved because of Sunday's sermon and our conversation tonight? What is God saying to you in all this? For example, do you need to become less conflict adverse? Or less impulsive in expressing your anger? Or more thoughtful about uncovering the source of your anger? Etc., etc.