



Small Group Leader Guide

James 1:19-22 | What Jesus Said About...Anger

Prepare: Things to do before your small group gets together

- **Remember** the last time you were angry. What were the circumstances? How did you express your anger? What do you regret or would do differently if you had another chance? **Pray** and spend time with God letting him examine you. **Thank God** for giving you emotions that allow you to experience the full range of your existence. **Praise** him for the grace that is greater than your errors in expressing anger. **Ask** God to guide you in how to respond to circumstances that tend to make you angry, and to lead you to relate with other people in ways that glorifies Him.
- **Read** the following Scriptures: Matthew 5:22; Ephesians 4:26-27; James 1:19-22. **Notice** the theme on anger and God's exhortations and instructions related to it. **Invite** God to lead you in your preparation, guiding you to develop a small group experience that will speak to the needs of every person who participates. **Submit** your heart to God's conviction, that you may be exhorted to experience anew the timely activity of God's Holy Spirit in your life.
- **Preview** this material and engage with God's Spirit as He guides your study.
- **Pray** for your small group members by name, asking God to use you to be a teacher of influence for each person in your group, for the glory and cause of Jesus. **Seek** God's wisdom in leading your small group to apply God's word to their lives. **Commit** yourself to the Lord, that you would live what you teach.

To The Point – What to impart to your small group

Key Verse: "for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (James 1:20, ESV)"

Objectives: Through your time exploring this passage, your small group members will:

Discuss the prevalence and problem of anger

Explore the implications of the consequences of misplaced, misdirected anger

Apply the biblical remedy for anger, in practical terms for your daily life.

Encounter: A suggested plan for your small group experience

Conversation Starter: Anger Management

Ask

Which of the following is the most destructive type of anger and why?

- The HULK - When you're angry, it's like you're a different person altogether, and any confrontation when you're angry is likely to make you angrier.
- The Teapot - When something gets you steamed, you will boil and make noise unless you are able to get away from the source and cool down.
- The Land Mine - people don't always know what will set you off, but when somebody or something triggers you, you explode, and you typically cause collateral damage.
- The Freezer - You give a cold shoulder to others, reduce your relationships to a chilled silence, and even put your emotions on ice.
- The Undertaker - When someone or something has crossed you, they or it are dead to you.
- The Diabolical Surgeon - You express your anger with cutting sarcasm, wielding the other people's words like a scalpel to cut apart their arguments, and you never bury the hatchet because you might need it later!

Allow participants to respond.

Which of these (or another style) best describes you, at your worst?

Allow participants to respond.

Say

Pastor Jamie recently launched his new series on what Jesus said. Our last time together, we explored the word to see that God has always spoken to his creation, and has determined to speak to us exclusively through Jesus to us, and that Jesus speaks to us now through His Word, recorded in the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and that its words are trustworthy and reliable to speak into our lives. In our time together now, we are going to look at a passage that is penned by Jesus' half-brother James, on the matter of anger. In it, we will hopefully allow God to examine us and help us understand anger better, and express anger correctly in ways that are healthy, constructive and fitting.

Open in prayer for your time together.

What is Anger? (James 1:19)

According to this verse, to whom is this passage (and the entire letter) written, and why does it matter?

This is written to "brothers," meaning Christians (male and females). Verse 1 actually clarifies that it is written to the "12 tribes of the dispersion," meaning that it is being addressed to the Jewish Christians who have been dispersed because of the persecution. This is significant because it informs us that the letters content is directly relevant (and instructive) to us, wherever we are geographically or situationally. This message is relevant to us, right now. Also note that the adjective "beloved" is intentionally included, indication an expression of affection and concern regarding the topics to be discussed.

Why do you think it matters that the instructions are directed to "every person?"

These instructions to "every person" show that this is universally applicable wisdom. The principles communicated are useful to everybody in all times. Our human nature tends to give ourselves exemptions for following good (especially biblical) advice, because of our

propensity to attempt to justify bad (unbiblical) behavior.

What does it mean to be "quick to listen and slow to speak?"

Allow participants to respond. Responses may include:

- *Being "quick to listen" means to be an initiating listener, that you orient your relationships to understand and value the other person.*
- *"Quick to listen" means to be an active listener, rather than passive. You strive to connect verbals and non-verbals, to seek clarity whenever necessary, and to assume as little as possible.*
- *"Slow to speak" means to not value your own opinion or position so much that you have to make sure you speak first, most, or loudest.*
- *"Slow to speak" means that you strive to be patient so that your words, when spoken, are weighty and appropriate, and that you don't worry about winning the war of "who said the most."*
- *"Slow to speak" also can mean that you don't have to inundate the other person with a flurry of words. You can represent yourself with few words, chosen wisely as the overflow of your heart, spoken well and under the control of God's Holy Spirit.*

What do you think is the relationship between being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry?

Allow the group to respond. Responses may include:

- *Anger should not be an initial response or reaction in relationships.*
- *If you are quick to listen and slow to speak, you will likely be angry about fewer things.*
- *Being slow to anger means being wise about what you choose to let anger you.*
- *Being quick to listen and slow to speak not only offers reliable insight that eliminates the cause for anger, but it also often provides the understanding that gives a prescription to remedy anger (be it perspective or context).*

The problem of Anger (James 1:20)

This verse uses the term "the anger of man." What do you think that term means to you?

While there could be several interpretations of this term, it is important to understand that this term does not mean "the anger of males," but that it is the anger identified with human nature.

What is "human anger?" What is its source and why do you think it can be expressed in so many incorrect/unhealthy ways?

Anger is wrath, indignation, or a deep-suited agitation, expressed as a result at the perception of wrongdoing or injustice. To be angry requires the angry person to feel that he/she was wronged or offended in some way. The source of anger is the mindset that the person who is angry is rightfully in a position to judge the matters that might elicit an angry reaction. It suggests that the person is right to expect others should behave and conduct themselves in predictable ways, and if not, anger is an expression of wrath upon those "wrong" behaviors and conduct.

What comes to mind about things that typically stir up "the anger of man?" For each of these, identify the "perceived injustice" that prompts the angry reaction.

Allow participants to respond, on issues that may resemble:

- I get mad if someone takes my parking spot. That is "my" parking spot, and that person took something that belongs to me.
- I get mad if someone cuts me off in traffic. They should be more considerate of me and not put me at risk with their carelessness!
- I get mad if my boss or colleagues ignore my suggestion. They are ignoring my wisdom and insight and choosing to pursue an inferior course of action.
- I get mad that my spouse/child did not do what I thought they were going to do or should do. I know what's best, and their action is an affront to my sense of influence/oversight of them, or an offense against my relationship with them.
- I get mad if you say something I don't like or disagree with. I get to judge your words and make assessments of your intent, and my anger is the expression of my disapproval.
- I get mad if you, in reacting to my anger, either get angry yourself or become withdrawn from me. If you get angry, you are challenging my right to be angry. If you withdraw, you are not receiving my judgment the way I think you should, with humility and gratitude.

What is "the righteousness of God?"

The righteousness of God is God's goodness, His standard of absolute perfection.

What do the "righteousness of God" and the "anger of man" have in common? How do they contrast?

They both are intrinsically identified with their objects - true righteousness is the expression of God's goodness, and man's anger is the carnal expression of his fallenness. They contrast in virtually every other way - God's righteousness is holy, loving, kind, relational, and enduring. Man's anger is selfish, prideful, impatient, judgmental, destructive, and insensitive.

What does it mean to you that the "anger of man" cannot accomplish the righteousness of God? Why can't it do this?

The expression of anger as wrath against a perceived wrong cannot attain God's perfect standard because our anger is often rooted in selfish pride and expressed in destructive means. It cannot reflect the goodness of God, but only the fallenness of man. The anger of man is utterly inadequate as a tool to glorify God.

The Remedy to Anger (James 1:21-22)

What is the significance of "therefore?"

The "therefore" establishes or affirms the significance of the prior statement (verse 20). It tells us that everything that follows because of the truth of the previous statement. Because you can absolutely rely upon the certainty that the anger of man cannot attain the righteousness of God, you can have supreme confidence that what is proposed will bring about the desired effect (that being the righteousness of God).

What does it mean to you to "put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness," in respect to anger? What does that look like in your life?

Simply stated, this “putting away” is a call to repentance. It is an exhortation to turn away from and set aside the selfish practices that result in your outbursts of human anger. It is important to recognize that from God’s perspective, your self-justified anger is filthy and wicked to God. It is important to be brutally honest with the ugliness of our own sin. From a practical perspective, it is a change of mind that results in a change of action. It is the deliberate action of agreeing with God with what he says about your human anger, and once you agree with God about it, you determine to conduct yourself accordingly. Once you are off the throne of your life that you have already submitted to Christ’s authority, you avail yourself to respond to your circumstances in a more appropriate manner. You will likely find that much of the matters that earlier had wrongly angered you, no longer anger you. And much of what does anger you, you will find the ability to release it to God and trust him with handling it appropriately.

Once you turn from your filthiness and rampant wickedness, you are instructed to instead receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul. What does that mean to you? Why is this instruction vital?

Repentance is turning from your sin and turning to the person of Jesus. It means to receive by faith the life-giving promise of Jesus through His Word applied to your life. It means rejecting your self-deception, your self-justification, your self-sufficiency, your self-prioritization, and instead submit yourself to God and His will for you.

What do you see in verse 22 that indicates the resource for ongoing relief from destructive outbursts of anger or unhealthy habits of anger? How does this resource accomplish the righteousness of God?

The exhortation is to put in to practice the living word, meaning to live by faith in the daily power of God. When you receive God's implanted word with meekness, you are by nature submitting your will to God's will, and setting aside your ways (that result in angry outbursts or habits), and instead inviting God to change your response. The earlier passages demonstrate that your actions (in your flesh) cannot attain God's righteousness. Only by submitting to Christ and His indwelling presence in your life is it possible for Him to impart His righteousness to you in your relationships and circumstances.

Jesus in Focus

Where in this study do you see Jesus: Christ-like practices, examples, principles?

Among the many acceptable answers:

- *Anger is a human emotion, and itself is not sin. Jesus demonstrated righteous anger and was not afraid to engage in conflict from time to time. However, he never was unrighteous in His anger, nor did He ever dishonor God in his conflicts with others.*
- *People fall short when they don't get angry in the things that anger Jesus, but get angry when their own standards are offended. We err when we get angry in the wrong things, and demonstrate our anger in the wrong ways. We are well served to consider the things that angered Jesus and determine to have Christ's perspective in determining whether matters are worth our anger, as well as how we demonstrate our anger.*
- *Repentance and forgiveness are vital to living free from anger. Remember that we have been forgiven of so much, and Jesus saved us at the depth of our sin. We should*

be swift to forgive as we have been forgiven.

What are some other Scriptures that come to mind or are relevant to this chapter's themes, teachings, or emphases?

Among the many acceptable possibilities:

- *Matthew 5:22*
- *Ephesians 4:26-27; 31*
- *Matthew 6:12*
- *Luke 23:34*
- *Colossians 3:8*
- *1 Timothy 2:8*

What is one "take-away" for you from this chapter?

Allow the group participants to respond.

Say Living out what Jesus says about anger is truly a matter of the intersection of faith and life. It can't be done just in theory; it has to be experienced by putting God's Word into practice. The standard is never that you'll never be wrong in your anger. It just means that when you are, you learn and grow, you give and ask for forgiveness. You quit relying on methods that were never designed to accomplish God's righteousness, and you instead use the means He provided through His word to guide you toward victory.

Let's close in prayer:

Invite the group to pray for one another. **Pray** over any needs or issues that were shared in your time together. Pray over the content discussed in your small group, highlighting the aspects that God's Spirit revealed to your group as important. **Confirm** your plans for your next gathering!