



**VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH**  
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS



## Anger Management

Tim Badal | December 8, 2013 | Matthew 5:21-26

The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount, Part 11

Take your Bible and turn to the Book of Matthew. We are continuing our series entitled "The Upside-down Kingdom Series, Lessons Learned from the Sermon on the Mount." We are looking at Matthew 5:21-26 and the subject of anger management. We will learn how God views the issue of anger and how He calls us to deal with it.

Let's get into God's Word. We will continue to learn that both our attitudes and our actions are important to God. Let's see what He has to say through His Son Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:21-26:

<sup>21</sup>"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup>So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup>Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup>Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."

Let's pray.

Father God, we ask Your blessing on our time today as Your Word is heard, read and taught. Help us apply it. There are so many truths for us to hear. I pray that we would receive Your Word and recognize what You have called us to do. Show us how to live and act in this sinful world. I pray that You would speak through me in a powerful and clear way. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

I'm going to be honest with you: you and I have anger issues. We may not know we do, but we do. It seems like more now than ever before we are people who are filled with anger. One of the

foremost anger-management consulting firms stated last year in their annual report that more than one out of every five Americans has an anger-management issue.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, more than 25,000 homicides took place in the United States last year. The most common reason was an argument within the home—29% of all homicides took place within the home. Now to put that into perspective, only 7.6% of all homicides were gang related. We have anger issues.

Studies show that 22% of all divorces take place because of anger-related violence. Seventy-nine percent of all violent children will have witnessed hundreds of forms of violence between their parents.

We are so filled with anger that we even create new words for it. In 1997, we coined a new phrase for getting angry in the car. We called it “road rage.” Why did we have to create a new word for getting angry in the car? It was because of situations like these:

- In Atlanta, Georgia a two-year-old toddler was shot through the neck by an irate motorist who was engaged in an argument over a road incident with the toddler’s father.
- In Denver, Colorado a 51-year-old man used a semi-automatic pistol to kill a 32-year-old cyclist who had cut him off on the road.
- In Cincinnati, Ohio a 29-year-old woman violently cut in front of a 24-year-old pregnant woman and slammed on the brakes in an irate gesture following her anger about the younger woman’s driving. The mother-to-be lost control of her car in a violent accident that killed her unborn child instantly.

Sadly, many of us struggle with being angry. In fact, many of us have not learned much since our birth. We came out kicking, screaming and crying and—for some of us—we still act the same way as the day we were born. We’re angry. There are times when it’s okay to be angry, but we need to understand how we are to be angry and where we are to point that anger.

We all show anger in different ways. Some of you blow up when you’re angry and others of you clam up. Some of you express your anger fully and fervently while others repress it by pushing it down inside. We differ in the intensity of our anger and our ways of dealing with it, but none of these ways are beneficial.

Anger is an issue for us as Christians as well. It is said that the number one reason for church conflict and people leaving the church is anger over preferential things.

Last week, I did the unthinkable in our small group. As a gregarious and happy-go-lucky person, I told my small group that anger is not something I find myself falling into very often. Yes, I’m susceptible to it but because my personality is so laid-back, I don’t become angry very often. I have a long fuse.

The devil loves when you say something like that! Let me tell you about my week. There were three different times when I was in the grocery store in a twenty-item-or-less aisle and the person in front of me was buying the whole store. Something as simple as that made me angry. We're doing some work at our house. Do you know what will make your blood boil? Try to insulate your house with cellulose blown-in insulation at 2:00 a.m. and see how angry you become.

It's been an angry week for me and I'm going to guess that you've had some bouts of anger this week as well. Some of you might say, "Well, I have the right to be angry. It's okay to be angry." At times it is okay to be angry, but King Jesus tells us when those times are.

I love how pastor and commentator [Kent Hughes](#) (sums up our passage. He says, "The Old Testament law condemns murder but I, Jesus, say that if you are angry without cause you will receive a fiery hell as well." What powerful words Jesus shares with us!

Jesus has said repeatedly that He did not come to abolish the Law. He didn't say, "It's alright to murder someone as long as you say you're sorry afterwards." Jesus is saying in His sermon that the Law is correct about murder—it is wrong to kill somebody literally or physically. But He also says, "I'm going to expand that. I'm going to give you the full teaching of the Law of Moses. Not only is it wrong to kill with your hands or with a weapon, it is also wrong to murder in your heart. It is wrong to say or think ungodly words of anger toward those around you."

If Jesus says that we "*will be liable to the hell of fire*" ([Matthew 5:22](#)) when our anger is uncontrolled, then we need to ask some hard questions. How should we show our anger? When should we show it? Against whom should we show it? To answer these questions, we will look at three points:

## **Managing Our Anger Involves a Biblical Synopsis Surrounding Anger**

## **Managing Our Anger Involves the Biblical Steps to Personal Reconciliation**

## **Managing Our Anger Involves a Biblical Strategy for Conflict Resolution**

### **1. Managing Our Anger Involves a Biblical Synopsis Surrounding Anger**

If we're going to make sure that we are living as Christ has called us to live, then we need to begin with a Biblical synopsis surrounding anger. We have to ask the questions, "What does God's Word say about this emotion? What does it tell me about when to show anger and when not to show anger? When am I sinning in my anger and when am I angry in a righteous way?

## Spirit-led Anger

The Bible talks very specifically about two types of anger. The first one is what I call “Spirit-led anger” or “righteous anger.” The Bible tells us that God—even in His perfection and holiness—gets angry. Numbers 14:18 says, “*The Lord is slow to anger.*” While He may be slow to anger, there are times that we see God being filled with anger. We see times in Scripture when His wrath boiled over and He extended that anger toward people. There is a time and a place where we can be like God and be angry.

For example, we can look to the story of Jesus in the Gospels when He went into the temple and found the moneychangers. This was His Father’s house—a place that was meant to be devoted to worship and prayer, dedicated to the things of God—and Jesus walked into a carnival of people making money and using the temple for profit. They were doing things that had no ministry focus whatsoever. They were doing nothing to uplift the poor and to help the needy. They were using the temple for their own selfish gain. Jesus became angry.

I’ll act it out for you: He came in and calmly said, “Come on guys. What are you doing? You know you shouldn’t be doing this. Now I’m a bit angry with you. This is not the kind of house that God wants.” No! That’s not how Jesus did it. The Bible says that Jesus threw out the moneychangers and the rabble-rousers. The idea here is that He shot-putted people out of the temple. He was angry! His anger was not sin because 2 Corinthians 5:21 says He “*knew no sin.*” So if Jesus was able to show that kind of passion and controlled anger without sinning than we should be able to do it as well.

There are three things we need to know about Spirit-led anger:

1. Spirit-led anger is commanded at times. Ephesians 4:26 tells us, “*Be angry and do not sin.*” That phrase “*be angry*” is a command. Right now, some of you are saying, “Hallelujah! I am commanded at times to be angry; this is awesome. I have three boys at home and God has commanded me to be angry. Amen! Close the book and let’s close in prayer.” But we need to understand what kind of anger God allows us to have. When is anger not sinful? When is it righteous and commanded by God versus when is it called out and rebuked by Christ?

In our passage, Christ is talking about an anger which He rebukes, reprimands and condemns. Many of us are angry but not in the commanded manner or toward the right objects. We’re missing the point; we’re missing the command.

2. Spirit-led anger is always under control. We never see God throwing a temper tantrum. He doesn’t get on the ground and start weeping, wailing or screaming. No, God is always measured in His anger. The Bible says He is “*slow to anger*” (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18;

Psalm 86:15 and more). It is the idea of “a long fuse.” That long fuse is measured and full of warnings and consequences about what will come. The idea here is, “I don’t want to be angry. I’m giving you an opportunity to change your ways but if you don’t change your ways, my anger will boil over and this is what will happen.” If this is how you explain yourself to your children or your spouse before becoming angry, then you’re leaning toward a righteous anger rather than an unrighteous one.

I never explain myself that way to my children. I just jump in with what’s going on in my heart and mind. When I’m angry it’s, “My name is Dad and hear me roar.” I assume it’s the same for many of you. We need to know that godly anger is that which is under control. Proverbs 25:28 tells us that if a person cannot control his emotions—including anger—then he is like an ancient city without walls. There’s no protection. Ephesians 4:26 says, “*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*” Some of us have done more than give the devil a foothold in our lives—we’ve given him a yard-hold or even a mile-hold because we can’t control the anger in our hearts. We need to be controlled.

3. Spirit-led anger is aimed at sinful circumstances. We never see God angry about small, preferential or inconsequential things. God would not be angry over how long the checkout line takes. He would never be angry because the kids didn’t clean their room. He would never be angry just because something didn’t work out the way He wanted it to. God gets angry over the big things. Many theologians call God’s anger a judicial anger. In other words, it’s as if the jury came out and said, “Yup, God the Father, You have every right to be angry in this situation.” Brothers and sisters, there are moments in our lives when we have every right to be angry. But we need to be careful in that anger—even if it is a righteous anger—because it is a slippery slope and we could walk into sin.

One pastor and commentator said that we’re not angry enough. He put it this way, “Some of us ought to learn how to express a little bit of righteous indignation about some of the things that are going on in our country, our churches and our schools. We also ought to be angry about some of the things our children are exposed to, some of the trends our society is promoting and some of the things that come waltzing into our homes on television.” We must be like God Who has a holy anger and yet in that anger does not sin. This is the right kind of anger for every follower of Christ.

Here’s the problem: I don’t believe most of us were righteously angry this week. Maybe some of you were but I know there was little righteous anger in my emotions this week and a lot of sinful anger.

## Sinful Anger

That brings us to the second type of anger which the Bible has much to say about: sinful anger. This is what Jesus is talking about in our passage. He is condemning sinful anger. I'm going to assume that most of us fall under this heading and not the former. So where do we begin? Notice what Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder.'"* We understand that murder is wrong. Everybody knew it then, too. The rabbis were teaching that murder was wrong during Jesus' day, so everybody in Jesus' audience understood this. It is wrong to grab somebody by the neck and kill them. I can't grab Rich Wood by the neck and kill him if I'm angry with him. [I couldn't kill Rich even if I wanted—he's far too strong for me.] I can't use a weapon either. Everybody understands that.

In our passage, Jesus says, "There's more to the commandment if we want to get to the heart of God." It's not just that I can't put my arms around someone and kill them. It goes farther. It means that I can't even say things in my anger that are hurtful and will harm the individual. Therefore we need to understand what Jesus says about this sinful anger:

1. Sinful anger begins in the heart. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 15:18-20 about what comes from the heart, *"But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person."* So the next time you get angry and someone says, "Why did you say such hurtful things? Why did you react in such a way?" don't point your finger and say, "Well, he made me do it because of the foolish things that he did." The person didn't make you angry.

When we show sinful anger, it is because of what's going on in our hearts. It's not someone else's fault. You cannot blame your anger on anybody but yourself. It's not the dumb things people do that make you angry; it is your decision to choose anger and to choose sin.

2. Sinful anger can become hateful speech. What is in the heart never stays in the heart. The heart is the main frame of human emotion and existence. Some of you might say, "It's okay, Tim. I'm angry but I'm going to keep it in my heart. I have evil things to think about someone because they have wronged me. So I'm going to think bad things about them but it will never come out."

Here's the problem: the Bible says that's just not possible. Matthew 12:34 says, *"How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* If you start thinking evil or hateful thoughts about people, it doesn't stop there. That which began in the heart proceeds to hateful speech. Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his*

*brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matthew 5:21-22).*

Jesus is giving an example here. He says, "I want you to know that conflict is up close and personal." He uses the term "brother." He's not talking to an actual family—a group of people in the audience who are a family—nor is he talking to the church. The church has not been established yet. Jesus is talking about our brotherhood as the people of humanity. He's saying, "When you struggle with someone, be careful. In your anger you're committing a sin that is equal to murder itself."

Let's flesh this out. Jesus says that our words and thoughts matter. Jesus says that if anybody is angry with his brother he will be "*liable to judgment*." Are you angry with someone today? God says, "I have a word for you."

Jesus says that anger then proceeds to insults. The word "insults" is the Aramaic word rhaka. It is a hard word to translate, but no doubt the people of Jesus' day knew exactly what He was saying because no explanation is given. Commentators and scholars believe that rhaka meant to be an empty-headed person, a numbskull, a nitwit, a blockhead, a bonehead or an idiot. Jesus is saying that He's concerned with how we talk about other people. This is an amazing standard. God wants us to treat all people—your spouse, your kids, your coworkers, your neighbors, your friends, your acquaintances, strangers and even your enemies—with the utmost respect and honor.

Rhaka was used to cut someone down to size and say that they had no worth from an intellectual standpoint. Notice that Jesus goes on and says, "*Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire*." Jesus uses the word mōros. Mōros is where we get the word "moron." The idea here is not of an I.Q. deficiency but the deficiency of man's condition or nature. When we call someone "a fool" in this way, commentators say it is literally saying, "You worthless, wicked idiot" to another person. The idea here is that in your un-humble and unproductive opinion, the person you're angry with has no value whatsoever. That person is a waste of space.

You might ask, "Why in the world would Jesus even care what we're thinking or saying?" Look at it this way. If you want to make me as a father become angry, just start telling my children that they're good for nothing and a waste of space. Why would I take offense to that? Because I had a hand in their creation and their upbringing. When you say that someone who is so close to me—who I've played a huge part in shaping—is good for nothing, then I'm going to take offense to that.

When we become angry and allow our hearts to spew out hateful speech, we begin to tell the created and the Creator that they're both lousy. When you become angry with your spouse or with someone you've never met before, you're saying both to that person and to our God, "You blew it. God, You made a mistake when You made that moron." Then you are cutting down God's providential goodness by His creative hand and you begin to say, "God makes mistakes." Jesus is saying, "This is just as bad as murder."

Sadly, too many of us have not only said such things about others but we think them all the time with all kinds of people. Thinking or saying sinful things was completely okayed by the Pharisees and the rabbis of Jesus' day. The people had come to understand that as long as you didn't lay an angry hand on someone you were okay. But Jesus says, "For Christ followers, it is not just about your hands but it is also about your heart." How angry is your heart today?

3. Sinful anger is just like homicide to God. You may not go to jail for what you're thinking but the Bible says that we will be judged for every careless thought and every careless word that is uttered. Those careless words and thoughts are angry thoughts and words against others because we think that they're no good. It's just as bad as homicide. It's an affront to God.

So what can we do? The Beatitudes help us. They remind us of a couple things. Do you want to not be angry in thought, word or deed? The Beatitudes tell us, "Be poor in spirit." Recognize that you are a spiritually broken and dead individual before God. Acknowledging that will allow you to be patient with other spiritually dead and bankrupt individuals. Remember that we are to be merciful. We need to remember that we have offended God, angered Him in our sin and angered other people with our sin. So when people begin to anger us we should be quick to show mercy.

## **2. Managing Our Anger Involves the Biblical Steps to Personal Reconciliation**

We're told to be peacemakers, to pursue peace. How in the world are we to do that? Jesus gives us some steps to biblical peacemaking. What are we to do when someone hurts us or wrongs us? Jesus paints a picture of what to do in Matthew 5:23-25.

He paints the picture of a first century Jew going to worship. Worship in Jesus' day was different than worship is for us. It's easy for us to go to worship. We drive our cars to church, walk through the foyer, grab a bulletin, sit down and we're ready to go. Some of us have not thought about what we're going to be doing and have not prepared our hearts at all. Jewish worship was far different. Many rituals took place on the way to worship. They would go through the Psalms of Ascent as they prepared their hearts for worship. Once they got to the temple, they had to make sure they had an offering. Then inside the temple there were many rooms that they had to work their way through as part of worship in order to prepare their hearts.



It would take hours on a Sabbath to do all of this. Jesus says that if you reach the pinnacle aspect of worship—the altar—after doing everything else and are ready to place your offering on the altar but then remember that someone is offended with you or you are offended with someone else, there is a game plan for what to do. There are four commands He gives us:

### **Leave Abruptly...**

The idea here is to drop everything and go make it right. Some of us worship, pursue God, sing praises and minister day in and day out, Sunday after Sunday, all while knowing that someone has an issue with us or we have an issue with somebody else. We never leave to go and make it right.

### **Go Quickly...**

The word “go” (*hypagō*) in verse 24 is a word that means “to go with great haste.” This word was used of the shepherds who saw the angels. They went with great haste to find Jesus, His father and His mother just as the angels had foretold. They stopped, left what they were doing and ran to where the angels told them to go. Reconciliation requires us to leave what we’re doing. Worship is secondary when there’s a broken relationship between a brother and sister because God says, “I don’t want to have a relationship with you; My fellowship with you is not going to be any good until your horizontal relationships are where they need to be.”

The Bible says, “How can we say we love God and hate our brother?” Reconciliation with our brother is of the foremost importance so that we can worship God with a clear conscious and be ready to receive from the Lord what He is going to give us. We need to go with great haste. Do not pass go. Go straight to where God has called you to be. When you get there, seek reconciliation.

### **Be Reconciled...**

There’s a story of a man named Alvin Straight who heard a message on the Sermon on the Mount when he was 73 years old. He was reminded and convicted that he and his brother had been unreconciled for years. Knowing that God condemns this type of anger, he was cut to the heart. Due to his age and illnesses, he was impaired from driving. So what did Alvin Straight do? Seeking to do as much as he could to be reconciled with his brother, he began a 300-mile trek from his house in Iowa to his brother’s house in Wisconsin—on his riding lawn mower.

Alvin Straight had it right. Romans 12:18 tells us, “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.*” We need to understand that and be reconciled. That means you need to stretch out as far as you can to be reconciled with the people around you.

## **Come Back...**

Then you are to come back and worship with a clean heart and a pure conscious. That is what God has called us to do concerning peacemaking. I think Max Lucado gets it right when he says, "As far as I know, this is the only time God tells you to slip out of church early. Apparently He'd rather have you give your olive branch to another than your tithe to Him." If you are worshipping and you remember that your mom is angry with you for forgetting her birthday, then get off the pew and find a phone. Maybe she will forgive you and maybe she won't, but at least you can return to the pew with a clear conscious. Our horizontal relationships have massive effects on our vertical relationships with God.

## **3. Managing Our Anger Involves a Biblical Strategy for Conflict Resolution**

So what do we do? I want to help you with some practical ways for peacemaking—some practical methods for conflict resolution. Some of us are afraid to death of conflict.

The best way to illustrate how we respond to conflict is seen in the movie Apollo 13. Jim Lovell—played by Tom Hanks—utters the famous words, "Houston, we have a problem," and there are two responses in mission control to this problem—this conflict. One of the NASA directors says, "This could be the worst disaster NASA has ever faced," to which another man responds, "With all due respect, sir, I believe this is going to be our finest hour."

As the church, we do not see conflict as a bad thing per se. Conflict is not helpful but we know that God is bigger than conflicts. When conflict occurs between two people, it is the finest hour for God to receive glory, for us to show grace and for us to see how God is going to lead His people and His church.

So how do we begin to deal with conflict? We need to accept it as something that is going to happen because we're all sinners. It's going to take place and it's an opportunity for us to show the love of Christ and to live out the Scriptures. So how do we begin to do that?

I am going to give you a seven-step strategy for conflict resolution. How do you make it right? You make it right by:

1. Addressing only those who are involved – When you start telling other people about your anger you're going to begin to gossip. Deal only with the person whom you are involved with—go to that brother or sister who has wronged you.
2. Avoiding words like "if," "but" or "maybe" – Those are denying words that keep you from speaking the truth in love.

3. Admitting things specifically – Husbands, we're lousy at this. When you offend your wife—or offend your children or someone else—don't just say, "Hey, I'm really sorry. Please forgive me." Be specific. Say, "I'm sorry that I did a, b and c; 'x, y, and z. Please forgive me for those things."
4. Acknowledging the hurt that you've done to somebody – When you offend someone, recognize it. Don't say, "Well, why are they making such a big deal out of it?" It may not seem like a big deal to you but you weren't the offended one so make sure that you acknowledge the hurt you've caused.
5. Accepting the consequences – When you offend someone, there may be restitution to pay. It may be monetary. It may be that you've lost some respect or trust in the eyes of others. Accept that and endure that discipline like a good soldier.
6. Asking for forgiveness – This goes both ways. When forgiveness is granted, that means you no longer hold it against them. Don't hold it over their heads.
7. Altering your behavior – Repentance has to be part of the resolution. David understood that when he said, "God, I sinned before You first, before anybody else. Against You alone did I sin, Lord. Let me get that right and then let me go fix the relationships that I have with others." We need to repent and then alter our behavior.

Brothers and sisters, we're going to be angry. We must learn how to deal with our anger or our anger will control us for the rest of our lives. Jesus says when our uncontrolled anger goes unchecked it's as bad as murder. If that's the case, we need to order our attitudes and our actions so that in every emotion—including anger—we can bring glory and honor to God.

Let's pray.

Father God, we come before You and ask that You would speak through the words that have been shared. In this Christmas season, we hear themes from Scripture such as love, peace and a message that brings goodwill toward all men. These themes support the truth that instead of being angry and speaking words of hurt and hate, we as Christians are called to extend love, peace and mercy. We are told that even in moments of righteous anger we need to speak the truth with love. I pray that You would empower us to do so. Empower us to speak words of love, not words of hate. Help us not to have hearts filled with rage but to see that You are a God Who uses His anger in a measured way. Let us be measured. Let us be calculated in how we allow our anger to be seen so that even in moments of righteous anger we may bring glory and honor to You. We love You Jesus. We're thankful for Your words. Please change our lives so that we may glorify and honor You. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.