

TOTAL REVOLUTION of VALUES

Session #3 – From Anger to Patience

Session Objective: In our world of instant Internet communication and faster food, the line to anger seems razor thin. From traffic jams or line-ups to pet peeves to frustration waiting for God, patience seems to be in diminishing supply. This session will:

- Differentiate between good and bad anger
- Highlight 'control' as one of the primary root causes of anger
- Encourage students to learn character lessons from anger

Session Outline

Small Group Questions:

1. Pet Peeves: What 'people habits/idiosyncrasies' drive you crazy? How do you want to respond when people do them?

2. What situations most test your patience?

Options: waiting, learning something new, pet peeves, injustice, yourself, God, etc.

3. Is it ok to get angry? Why or why not?

Leader Say: *Psychologists say that anger is a real, legitimate and important emotion. Like a radar system, it warns that something is wrong – that we must take action in a situation or with ourselves.*

Interestingly, God gets angry regularly. For example, we can read in the Bible that God got angry when His people repeatedly disobeyed. He also gets angry when He sees injustice, racism, when the poor are exploited, when a woman is assaulted, a child is abused, when people are unfaithful and the list goes on. God gets angry because these kinds of actions hurt us, hurt others and hurt Him.

Another example of anger in the Bible is from Jesus (Mark 11:15-17). When the moneychangers were in front of the temple – turning religion into a moneymaking operation, Jesus cleansed the temple (or in other words, he did a Bruce Lee/Arnold Schwarzenegger impression with tables flying and people running).

Read Ephesians 4:26

Leader Say: *This passage helps answer the question, “Is it ok to get angry?” The first part assumes there will be times when we get angry: “In your anger...”. But, the second part, “...do not sin” says that we can choose not to sin in our expression of anger. In other words, there is an appropriate way to express anger as well as an inappropriate, sinful and harmful way to express anger.*

4. To answer the question, ‘how can we tell if our expression of anger is sinful or not’, read Ephesians 4:2-3, 4:15, 4:20-5:2. What are the common threads through this chapter?

Leader Note: *After some discussion time, if it hasn’t been raised already, outline the theme of love.*

- *Bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2-3)*
- *Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)*
- *Live a life of love (Ephesians 5:2)*

Leader Say: *The theme of love can help us formulate some questions that can help us determine if our expression of anger is sinful or not. I call these three questions: The Love Test:*

- 1. Does it show love for God? (obedience to Him, follow Him – John 14:23 – “Whoever loves me will obey my teaching” – heart, mind and will)*
- 2. Does it show love for others?*
- 3. Does it show love for ourselves?*

Let’s apply these questions to two common expressions of anger – the skunk response and the turtle response.

5. How do the images of a skunk and turtle relate to how some people express anger?

Leader Note: The Skunk and Turtle anger responses can be expanded as follows and can be a fun exercise:

- **Skunk Response** – Most of the time a skunk just goes about his business. But, when you upset a skunk (corner, frighten, sometimes just because it woke up on the wrong side of the yard), they respond with a smell...everybody smells you and the skunk...you might not even be who the skunk is angry at...but you still get the spray and the smell (if you’ve ever been sprayed or a pet has... you know). People respond like skunks...press the right button, pull the right trigger...like a tornado – can come out of nowhere and ...everybody knows they are upset. It’s not always a rage. Sometimes it’s some less expressive means, but no less harmful. For example the Ginsu Tongued Skunk - (their tongue is sharper than the knives you order on TV with gossip, criticism, sarcasm (biting and

hurtful comments supposedly said in gest), Mime Skunk – no words but you know by actions the person is angry, Strategist Skunk – no initial response, just kind of take it and smile, look at this as one battle in what will now be a war – ‘you have no idea who and what line you have crossed. You will be sorry! Plot and plan revenge that is swift, sudden and severe.

- **Turtle Response** – Situation comes...anger is there, but kept inside. The person refuses to admit they are angry. The result: Depression – not always, but often called ‘frozen rage’ or Volcano – real rage.
Option: A great illustration is to have a volunteer attempt to keep an alka seltzer tablet in their mouth with ginger ale. Be sure to have a bucket nearby.

6. How do the SKUNK and TURTLE responses do in light of the love tests?

Leader Note: Walk students through each of the three tests. Add in points as needed.

- **Love for God** – Ask two questions: 1. Is this about His Kingdom or mine?
2. Who is in control? God or me? Skunk and Turtle approach - ANGER is in control...When Jesus was in the temple, He was under control
- **Love for Others** – Is your goal to bring others to maturity? To protect others from harm? Skunk hurts many more people than the offender. Both seek to control – do what I want or else. This isn't love.
- **Love for Self** – The Turtle approach is internally destructive - Physical Consequences – illness – from headaches, to heart attacks, etc. – anger eats away at your insides. Skunk approach isolates yourself from loving relationships...skunks don't have a lot of friends. You also isolate yourself from truth and personal growth.

1. Read Ephesians 4:26-32. When anger rises within us, how should we deal with it?

Leader Note: Bring out the following points as needed:

- Key is to deal with it. The second half of verse 26 tells us to deal with it quickly and directly. Otherwise, it's like an open cut that festers and the devil can get a foothold (v. 27) through bitterness, resentment, division, revenge, etc.
- Speak the truth (don't turtle)- (v. 25)
- Speak positively. Watch your mouth! (v. 29)
- Forgive (v. 32)

8. Ephesians 4:31 says “Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” (Ephesians 4:31). How can we do this? How do we replace anger with patience (Ephesians 4:2)?

Leader Note: Trying harder likely won't cut it – particularly because anger is a big problem for many people. This is the time to talk about the revolutionary power of God.

The following are two illustrations that God can and does change lives. Use one or both.

1. Think for a minute of a person you've seen who has blown their top in anger. Imagine someone with an anger 20 times greater – so angry – he couldn't live with other people – he lived in cemeteries – he'd been bound with chains – but tore the chains off – wonder around crying out and cutting himself with stones - - – imagine him storming through this door – how would we respond?

A lot of us would be frightened. A lot would be disgusted. A lot would think this guy was too far gone.

When Jesus met a man very much like the one I've described (see Luke 5) it's important to note how he responded - not surprised, not afraid, didn't run away, wasn't disgusted, didn't back down either, he took charge...freed the man of the demons who were tormenting him and brought healing to him. I bring up that story to remind you - you aren't alone...Jesus holds the power to change...if he has power over sin, power over death, power over demons, he can exercise power over your anger...and this is a partnership....with the love, support, accountability of local church, counsel of people, etc.

2. After a church service, Tony Campolo prayed for a man who had cancer. Later that week, the man's wife called. She reminded him of his prayer and told Tony that her husband had died. But she said, "Don't feel badly. When he came into that church he was filled with anger. He knew he was dying and he hated God. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse everything and everyone around him. But, after you prayed for him, a peace had come over him and a joy had come into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. They've been wonderful days. Thank you for praying for healing. My husband wasn't cured, but he was healed. (Adapted from: **Let Me Tell You A Story**)

9. Is God calling you to take any steps to release your anger in more healthy ways? To change your skunk or turtle response? To forgive someone? To ask for God's revolutionary power to change you?

Leader Note: Be sure to follow-up on student responses after the session. The revolution from anger to patience is a difficult one and requires support and help!

Prayer Options: Time of silent prayer and confession.

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.