

Sunday, December 6, 2009—The Weight of Our Words—Defusing Anger

### **Introduction**

- This morning we going to begin winding down our fall series on the tongue.
  - December 13—Christmas Program and Fellowship Dinner
  - December 20—The Two-Fold Purpose of the Incarnation
  - December 27—The Weight of Our Words Conclusion
- Ephesians 4:29, 31—this morning we are going to be dealing directly with an issue raised in verse 31, namely how to deal with anger.
- Anger takes over when patience runs out and often vents itself in harsh words.
- Biblical Examples:
  - Genesis 4:5—anger was Cain’s response after God rejected his sacrifice.
  - I Samuel 18:5-9—King Saul’s anger was kindled when David received more praise than he did from the people.
  - Jonah 4—Jonah’s anger was kindled against God when God did not destroy Nineveh like Jonah wanted.
- Unfortunately, anger never lives in isolation. It is like a cancer that continues to grow and spread. It may begin with just a small incident of rejection, jealousy, disappointment, thwarted gain, or unkind comparison. But if these things aren’t resolved, anger can quickly grow into other problems.
  - Cain’s rejected offering sparked the murder of his brother, which resulted in fear, alienation, and God’s judgment.
  - King Saul’s anger caused him to brood, become depressed, and develop a deep hatred for David.
  - Jonah’s anger turned inward and Godward as he became vulnerable to self-pity, depression, and thoughts of suicide.
- Anger becomes a social problem with far-reaching effects when it vents itself through words. Our anger is most often expressed in our words.

### **Learning to Apply Patience**

- How can we prevent anger for running our lives and ruining our relationships? We needed to replace an angry spirit with a patient spirit.

- The New Testament uses two primary words for patience. One carries the thought of not returning harm to those who have harmed us, even though it is within our power to do so. The other word reflects the ability to maintain a good attitude even under pressure.
- The problem is that both dimensions of patience contradict our natural reactions. When we're offended, hurt, or reprovved, we want to retaliate.
- Before we go any further we must understand that anger is a valid God given emotion. God is sinless, yet the Bible tells us that He possess the capacity to get angry.
  - Exodus 4:14
  - Numbers 25:3
- Anger is a “signal emotion” that alerts us to injustice, ungodliness, and unrighteousness.
- Even though God intended anger to be a righteous response to something that's wrong, we all have felt anger that is far from righteous. Our task as believers is to separate anger from the sins that accompany it.
- Three New Testament instructions can help us to respond properly to anger. All three of them deal with the application of patience.
- **Be Slow to Wrath**—James 1:19—this habit develops our ability to handle anger when it first begins to rise. It equips us to evaluate what has happened and choose appropriate responses.
- **Be Angry and Sin Not**—Ephesians 4:26—we must be aware of the sins that so easily attach themselves to anger.
- **Deal with Anger Before Sundown**—Ephesians 4:26—letting anger linger to long with touch off a corrosive effect in our lives. We need to direct our focus on finding solutions that will bring peace to our inner man and restoration of relationships.

### **Be Slow to Wrath**

- James 1:19—the word “slow” literally means to hesitate or delay. The essence of this wise advice is to be patient.
- Restraining anger means hesitating long enough to carefully evaluate a situation.
- The following five steps can help us hesitate, evaluate, and control our anger:
- *Remember God's statements to angry people*

- Genesis 4:6-7—Why are you angry?
- Jonah 4:4—Do you have good reason to be angry?
- *Check to see if you have sufficient facts to justify your anger:* seeking to understand both sides of a matter slows anger but is also reflected in words that show self control and a fair spirit.
- *Try to understand the situation from other points of view*
- *Pinpoint the specific cause of your anger:* the sooner we get to the source of our anger the better we will be able to deal with it.
- *Verbalize the sense of oncoming anger:* pride makes it hard to say, “I am angry.”
- Proverbs 16:32

### **Be Angry and Sin Not**

- Ephesians 4:26
- This command draws a clear distinction between anger and sin. Anger in and of itself is not sin. Just as we can be tempted without sinning, we can become angry with following up with a sinful response.
- Lingering anger turns into the self-destructive sins of bitterness and hatred. Speech sins like lying, slander, murmuring, threatening, cursing, taking God name in vain, and contentious words are all products of anger handles improperly.
- Murder, envy, strife, and revenge are common sins of an angry heart.
- Psalm 141:3—“if you can’t say anything nice don’t say anything at all.”

### **Deal With Anger Before Sundown**

- Ephesians 4:26
- God wants us to deal with each day fresh, not with unresolved anger and guilt from the day before.
- Psalm 37:8
- Ephesians 4:31

- When we become angry, our natural tendency is to direct our mental and emotional energy toward the source of our anger. The person that has stimulated the anger becomes an overriding preoccupation. We think about the perceived injustice everywhere we go, so we take it out on other people who have done nothing to deserve our anger. We plan what to say the next time we see the offending person, what he or she might say in reply, and what our follow up comment will be. We fantasize various schemes of revenge.
- Meanwhile, doing all these things, we actually become servants to the one(s) on whom we have focused our anger. The other person may not even know we're angry, and even if he does, the matter doesn't consume his time and energy nearly as much as it does our own.
- The intensity of our emotion will usually progress through five stages.
  - Fret—we will mull the problem over in our minds
  - Envy
  - Anger—this is the slow burn
  - Wrath—this is the explosion
  - Evil—the plot to carry our revenge
- Read pages 110-111 from Stowell's book

### **Redirecting our Attention**

- Successfully dealing with anger requires not only that we transfer the situation over to God, but also that we take positive steps towards the source of our anger.
- See chart in PowerPoint
- *Forgiveness*—genuine forgiveness is more than simply giving someone a break after he or she has offended you.
  - Romans 12:17-21
  - Ephesians 4:31-32
- *Honest Reactions*—we must redirect our energy by honestly communicating with the one who has hurt us.
  - Show wisdom in choosing a time and place to talk.
  - Carefully choose words that communicate an open and nondefensive attitude.
  - Have the humility to admit your part in the problem.
  - State your perception of the situation without projecting blame.
  - Commit yourself not to permit the conversation to deteriorate into a revival of anger.

### **Conclusion**

- Redirecting our focus and our energy gives birth to patience in our hearts. Patience rejects angry words and replaces them with words that:
  - Reflects a forgiving spirit
  - Are constructive
  - Lead to resolution
  - Are nonjudgmental
  - Are sensitively timed
  - Are sensitive to the needs of others, even the needs of our offenders.
  - Edify and ministry grace unto the hearers.
  
- Patience is the virtue that transforms an angry tongue. Patience takes time to hesitate and evaluate. It rejects anger sins. True patience finds its strength from the word of God working in the believer as we seek to apply God unconditional love toward those who have hurt us.
  
- Just Grace It!!!!