



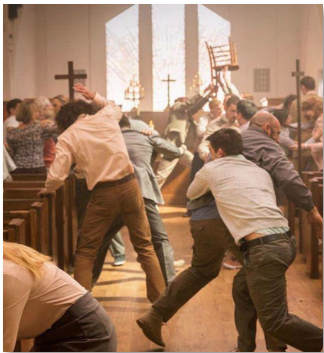
The Anger Trap

Devotional Thoughts for the Week of
September 27, 2020

by Joan Lonsway

This is week 4 of our series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and we are focusing on Matthew 5:21-26. Jesus begins to illustrate what the pursuit of a life that reflects the very character of their father God looks like... Our devotional author this week is Joan Lonsway. Joan is retired and lives in Fairborn, and she has been a member of BCC for 28 years. She is a leader in Bible Study Fellowship International and, enjoys making greeting cards in her spare time.

Day 1: Defend Yourself Against Anger



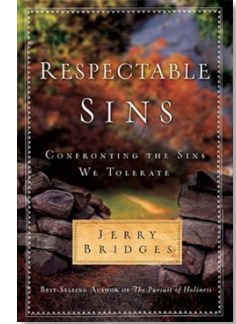
Sunday, in my opinion, is the day Satan works overtime to distance me from God. It happens most often when I am getting ready for church. My mind starts going through a list of past slights, both real and imagined. Why did she say that? Why wasn't I invited? Why did he get more than me? Why? Why? Why? Now I'm mad, really mad, and I don't want to go to church. I just want to pout.

Does this happen to you? What do you do about it? Satan teaches his nephew, Wormwood, in the book *The Screwtape Letters*, to seek out our weakest times to put on a full-blown attack. A couple of my married friends know this and often ride to church in separate cars to avoid discussions that might cause conflict. Good defense!! Personally, I start the morning asking for God's strength and guidance to carry me through the day.

James 1:20 says that man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. What's your fail-safe for avoiding anger? Have you had to use it lately?

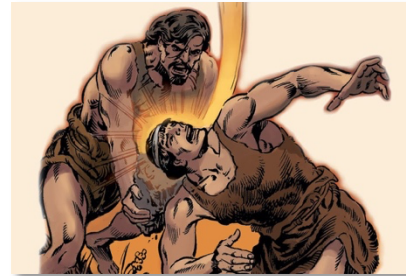
Day 2: Anger, A Respectable Sin?

In his book, *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges focuses on an aspect of anger that we unconsciously treat as "acceptable," that is, it's okay to be angry at someone because I have the right. But do you? Mr. Bridges says that, in facing up to our anger, we need to realize that no one else causes us to be angry. We *choose* to be angry.



I wish I could say that anger is limited to non-Christians, but it isn't. If we lose sight of God's laws and depend on our own view of what is right, we will be judged even if we respond to someone else's anger, in the wrong way. That's why it is so important to keep your Bible handy to remind you that anger is judged alongside sins you may consider "bigger" and more outrageous.

What's your take on anger? Has it been too easy to justify? If so, what are you going to do about it in the future? Matthew 5:21-26 points out that anyone who is angry at his brother will be judged.



Day 3: Angry Men in the Bible

In his sermon series "Seven Angry Men", pastor Richard Tow (Life Church, Springfield, MO) examines anger, considering the experiences of seven biblical characters. For example: Cain blamed Abel for his problems; Moses lost his temper and didn't follow God's precise instructions; and Balaam beat his donkey for getting in his way, even though his objectives were his own, not God's. Then there's King Ahab, Haman, Esau, Absalom and so on. I am sure whatever caused their anger involved human frailties and lack of trust in God.

How often do you put the blame on others for your own personal struggles? Like Moses, do you act first and regret later? Has God ever called you out for using Him to justify your personal agenda? Psalm 37:8 says: “Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself, it tends only to evil” (ESV).

Day 4: Can Anger Be Justified?

Jesus displayed anger several times. In Mark 3:1-6, He angrily challenged men who try to trap him for performing a miracle on the Sabbath.

Another time, He drove out the money changers from the temple (John 2:15-17). But God’s anger is always righteous. Is ours?



i Alexander Smirnov (1947-), *The Cleansing of the Temple*

There are times we can justify our anger. The events these past months have caused many of us anger over the killings, the looting, and the destruction done to innocent citizens. I have become angry when I’ve heard vicious gossip about people I love. When I lived in Massachusetts, I witnessed a supervisor berate his employee in front of a roomful of people. How mean! How unjust!

But let’s face it. Most of our anger has more to do with our own insecurities and shortcomings and less on what is right or wrong. Do we spend too much time trying to solve our own issues, and not turning them over to God?

Once I got into a situation where someone kept nagging me, hoping I would back down and do things their way. I found myself lashing out, my blood pressure giving off signals to the tune of “Stop in the Name of Love.” Later I apologized. There was no excuse for my behavior. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted or insulted for what is right.

Day 5: Taming Your Anger

Joyce Meyer, Christian author and speaker, often discusses her past issues with anger. At one seminar I attended, Joyce talked about an argument with her husband that left her feeling guilty and wondering how she could help others conduct their lives according to Scripture when she couldn’t control her anger. Her feelings of guilt intensified until she was almost frantic. Suddenly, God spoke to her heart and said, “Anger is not a sin—it is what you do with it that becomes sin.” Joyce, over time, was changed through God’s word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

How can we control our anger? Barney Fife would say, “nip it in the bud.” Uncontrolled anger can cause spiritual, emotional, and physical problems. Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit that is given to us to help us control ourselves.

Proverbs 16:32 says, “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (ESV).



More on Joan...

Joan is an accomplished cook, evidenced by her winning the Betty Crocker “Homemaker of Tomorrow” award in 1963. Her skill at Scrabble helped her beat the State of Ohio Scrabble Champion. Joan, a Volksmarcher, completed almost 125 6.2 mile-walks. She is looking forward to new adventures in the future.