

# Command #3: Overcome Anger

Matthew 5:21-26 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

<sup>21</sup> "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' <sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. <sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

## Condensed Version

Read Matthew 5:21-26 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. What reason do verses 21-22 give that anger is destructive and must be overcome?
2. What reason do verses 23-26 give that anger is destructive and must be overcome?
3. Contrasting Luke 23:32-34 with John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13, what are the differences between righteous and unrighteous anger?
4. What do you admire about Jesus in the times He displayed biblical, godly anger?
5. What do you admire about Jesus in the times that He did not get angry but instead forgave and prayed for those persecuting Him?

## Study (answers follow below)

1. Context: Why is it important to note that Matthew 5:21-26 immediately follows 5:17-20?
2. Verse 22 says "anyone who is angry. . ." Reading this in English doesn't specify the duration of that anger, but the way the phrase is constructed in the original language of the New Testament makes it clear that a persistent anger is what is in view. What does Ephesians 4:26 teach about anger that corresponds with this?
3. What reason do verses 21-22 give that anger is destructive and must be overcome?
4. In Jewish culture, name-calling was very insulting because it stripped someone's identity from them (since one's name revealed character) and substituted something offensive. Read verse 22 and explain what a contemporary expression of angry insults might look like.
5. Identify the transition in thought that occurs in the passage after verse 22?

6. What reason do verses 23-26 give that anger is destructive and must be overcome?
7. How do verses 23-24 picture URGENCY in dealing with anger?
8. How do verses 25-26 add to the urgency? What does this teach us about God's view of relationships?

## Answers:

1. In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus taught that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. For the rest of chapter 5, Jesus contrasts his teaching with the faulty interpretations and/or applications of the Old Testament which the Pharisees and teachers of the law had promoted through their views—but not opposite the Old Testament itself! Jesus' teaching here actually shows what God's intention in the OT was all along. Matthew 5:21-26 is the first of six specific areas covered as it shows the relation between murder and anger.
2. Anger is a God-given emotion; whether it is appropriate or inappropriate is determined by what we do with that emotion.
3. It is the root of murder and murderous in principle (21-22).
4. (personal answers)
5. Verses 21-22 focused on YOUR anger, but now in vv. 23-26 Jesus turns to the perspective of the OTHER party, the person who was wronged. These verses give another reason that persistent anger is so destructive for followers of Christ.
6. Anger damages relationships with others—and hence our relationship with God. It keeps us from true worship of God.
7. The picture is the temple in Jerusalem. A worshipper has brought a gift to the altar and it is assumed that it has been given to the priest, ready to be offered. Right then, that person remembers that a brother or sister back home has something against them. They probably had to wait in line a long time just to get up there—why not offer the gift quickly and take care of the reconciliation later? No, Jesus says, leave your gift RIGHT THERE. STOP! Leave the animal and go make it right: Broken relationships are so serious that God insists on immediate reconciliation.
8. This is not just about how to set aside legal matters but how to seek a type of reconciliation that turns adversarial relationships around. God's law was given not just to add rules but to NURTURE RELATIONSHIPS. We have to have an intensity about protecting relationships and not destroying them—not just by physical murder but also by anger and lack of reconciliation.

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## Worship

Read Luke 23:32-34, John 2:14-17, and Matthew 21:12-13.

As we examine Jesus' commands, it will not be possible to examine how he fulfilled some of them because not all of the commands can be applied to him, like the one we are currently examining. Jesus never needed to be reconciled to the Father because He never sinned, nor was He ever wrongfully angry. However, we know that anger or wrath is an attribute of God. There are many examples where God, although slow to anger, was angry at individuals as well as Israel and other people groups as a whole. There are several instances where Jesus' actions could be seen as anger, such as his cleansing of the temple (John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13). Some people consider any anger to be inappropriate. However, in examining the Scripture we see that Christ often caused confrontation rather than avoiding it. Then there are times where, remarkably, He is not angry, none more incredible than during the crucifixion (Luke 23:32-34). Let's examine Christ through these Scriptures in order to understand this command regarding anger more clearly.

1. Contrasting Luke 23:32-34 with John 2:14-17 and Matthew 21:12-13, what are the differences between righteous and unrighteous anger? (Examine when and where Jesus got angry and at whom and why did He get angry?)
2. Specifically, Jesus was angry at people who were doing what? Who or what was He defending?
3. What do you admire about Jesus in the times He displayed biblical, godly anger? (For example, I admire Him standing up to those who were interfering with people worshiping at the temple.)
4. What do you admire about Jesus in the times that He did not get angry but instead forgave and prayed for those persecuting Him? (For example, I admire Jesus asking the Father to forgive those who had nailed Him to the cross and probably took pleasure in doing so.)

## Reconciliation

Galatians 2:11-14

Jesus commands us to be reconciled to one another *before* worshiping Him. There are several places in Scripture we see the need for reconciliation. I think my (Greg's) favorite is Galatians 2:11-14. In this account, false teachers come and cause a complete division between Jews and Gentiles at the church in Antioch until Paul addresses the matter and begins the process of reconciliation.

1. Is Jesus instructing us to place human relationships before our relationship with Him?
2. Why does Jesus put such emphasis on reconciliation?
3. In reading this account in Galatians, what are some of the things necessary for *true* reconciliation to take place? (For example – *humility*: those who were responsible needed to admit they were wrong; *truth*: Paul stood firm against every one of his Jewish brothers in Christ because without God’s truth there is no true reconciliation.)
4. Of all the things you listed above, what do you think is the most important one?
5. What is the main indication that reconciliation needs to occur from this passage or anytime reconciliation is needed?
6. Is it possible to maintain a relationship with someone but not be truly reconciled in your heart?

## Obey

1. Is there anyone you need to be reconciled with? What do you need to do to make it right? Write out what step of obedience you are willing to take \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. If you try in your own strength to overcome anger, you are headed down a one-way street—the wrong way! Meditate on Galatians 5:16-26 to learn WHERE the power for Christian living comes from.

## Train

1. Ask them to work through this discipleship guide and discuss with them their answers to the questions above.
2. Pray for and with them about ways God can use them to make a difference in their world.
3. Model for them in the context of a real-life relationship what it looks like to be salt and light, to be a disciple of Jesus in everyday life. They need to see it in you in addition to hearing it from you.