

LESSON 11

ANGER AND BITTERNESS

"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."

Ephesians 4:31-32

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

James 1:19-20

LESSON 11: ANGER AND BITTERNESS

Anger and bitterness are two noticeable signs of being focused on self and not trusting God's sovereignty in your life. When you believe that God causes all things to work together for good to those who belong to Him and love Him (are obedient to His Word), you can respond to trials with joy instead of anger or bitterness (*based on John 14:15; Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-29; Ephesians 4:31; James 1:2-4; I Peter 1:13-16; I John 5:3*).

I. The purposes of this lesson are:

- A. To present the biblical view of anger and bitterness;
- B. To help you recognize unbiblical responses to anger and bitterness;
- C. To develop a plan for overcoming anger and bitterness;
- D. To continue the development of a case study in biblical counseling; and
- E. To introduce procedures for biblical counseling sessions.

I. The outline of this lesson

A. Self-confrontation

1. **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES: ANGER AND BITTERNESS** (Lesson 11, Pages 2-3)
2. **UNBIBLICAL RESPONSES TO ANGER AND BITTERNESS** (Lesson 11, Pages 4-5)
3. **A BIBLICAL VIEW OF ANGER** (Lesson 11, Pages 6-9)
4. **A BIBLICAL VIEW OF BITTERNESS** (Lesson 11, Pages 10-11)

B. Steps for spiritual growth

1. **OVERCOMING ANGER AND BITTERNESS** (Lesson 11, Pages 12-16)
2. **LESSON 11: HOMEWORK** (Lesson 11, Page 18)
3. **STUDY GUIDE FOR DAILY DEVOTIONS** (Lesson 11, Pages 19-21)

C. Biblical counseling

1. **A CASE STUDY: MARY'S HUSBAND HAS LEFT HER** (Lesson 11, Page 17)
2. **BIBLICAL COUNSELING RECORD** (Supplement 13)
3. **BIBLICAL COUNSELING SUMMARY AND PLANNING** (Supplement 14)

HOMEWORK # 1

USE THIS FOR YOUR DEVOTIONS THIS WEEK!

- ① PRAY
- ② READ
- ③ HIGHLIGHT VERSES
- ④ PRAY

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES: ANGER AND BITTERNESS

② 2-27-91

USUALLY TOGETHER

Anger and bitterness are formidable detriments to biblical love, harmonious relationships, and maturity in Christ. Failing to put off anger and bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit, gives Satan an opportunity in your life, obscures your witness to others, and disrupts the unity in the Body of Christ. Dealing biblically with anger and bitterness requires wholehearted obedience to God's Word in every circumstance and with every person, even if your feelings dictate otherwise (based on Matthew 5:16; Romans 14:19; I Corinthians 13:4-5; II Corinthians 2:10-11, 5:14-15; Galatians 5:17-26; Ephesians 4:1-3, 26-27, 31-32; 6:11; Colossians 3:8-15; Hebrews 12:15).

INTRO

- A. GO OVER LIST
- B. DISCOVERING PROB. PATTERNS WORKSHEET
- C. REVIEW MEMORY VERSE
- D. DEVOTIONS

③ 3-13-91

- A. HOMEWORK-REVIEW
- 1. MEMORY (SPH 4:31,32)
- 2. PROB. PATTERNS WORKSHEET
- 3. PAPERS
- 4. LIST
- B. LOOK OVER PRESSURE POINTS ON THE LIST THAT CAN BE CHANGED. - ASK JESUS FOR HELP.
- C. DEVOTIONS; LESSON 11 PG. 4/5.

I. God's View

(Principle 45) Anger (great displeasure, animosity) that is quickly aroused or quickly expressed is characteristic of your old self apart from Jesus Christ and is contrary to Scripture (Galatians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:8; James 1:19-20). Bitterness is related to anger and demonstrates a great dissatisfaction with God's sovereignty in your life. Bitterness arises out of living to please self instead of living to please the Lord (Acts 8:18-23; Romans 3:10-18, esp. vs. 14) and causes much trouble (Hebrews 12:15).

- D. WE MUST OBEY IN SPIRE OF OUR FEELINGS.
- E. PROBLEM PATTERNS WORKSHEET.

II. Your Hope

(Principle 46) Since God's Word commands you to put away anger and bitterness (Psalm 37:8; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8), it is possible to do so (I Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15-16).

(Principle 47) You do not need to defend or preserve what you perceive to be your "rights" (based on Psalm 37:23, 84:11-12; I Peter 2:19-25), because God causes all things to work together for good to those who belong to Him and love Him (Romans 8:28-29).

④ BIBLICAL VIEW OF ANGER AND BITTERNESS PG 6.

READ SHEET.

III. Your Change

(Principle 48) You are to control your spirit (Proverbs 25:28) and put off anger, wrath, bitterness, quick-temperedness, dissension, abusive speech, and strife; and you are not to take into account a wrong suffered (Matthew 5:21-22; I Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; I Timothy 2:8; Titus 1:7). Instead, you are to put on patience, kindness, humility, bearing with one another, tenderheartedness, forgiveness, love, and self-control (Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-14).

⑤ GIVE SHEET 10, 11 BITTERNESS.

VI. LIST THE CIRCUMSTANCES OR RELATIONSHIPS IN WHICH YOU ARE (OR HAVE BEEN) TEMPTED TO BECOME ANGRY OR BITTER. (PROV. 9:6; 14:6; MATT. 7:1-5; GAL 5:16-21)

IV. Your Practice

(Principle 49) List the circumstances or relationships in which you are (or have been) tempted to become angry or bitter (*based on Proverbs 9:6, 14:16; Matthew 7:1-5; Galatians 5:16-21*). Develop a biblical plan for overcoming anger or bitterness in those situations and formulate a contingency plan for dealing with anger or bitterness that may arise quickly or unexpectedly (*based on Proverbs 28:13; I Thessalonians 5:22; II Timothy 2:15, 22; I Peter 1:13-16*). As you rely on God's power and provisions (*John 15:5; Galatians 5:24-25; II Timothy 3:16-17*), diligently do what you have planned to avoid further sin with regard to anger or bitterness (*James 1:22-25; 4:17*).

Refer to OVERCOMING ANGER AND BITTERNESS (Lesson 11, Pages 12-16) to help you determine specific, biblical steps in overcoming anger or bitterness.

(Principle 50) Practice biblical love (*Proverbs 10:12; I Corinthians 13:4-8a; I Peter 1:22, 4:8; I John 4:11*) by forgiving others just as God has forgiven you (*Mark 11:25; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13*) and by doing kind and tenderhearted deeds to the very individuals with whom you become irritated (*Ephesians 4:32; I Peter 3:8-9*).

Refer to FORGIVENESS (FORGIVING OTHERS AS GOD HAS FORGIVEN YOU) (Lesson 12, Pages 3-5) and THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL LOVE (Lesson 13, Pages 4-6) to help you gain a biblical perspective on these integral parts of your life in Christ.

UNBIBLICAL RESPONSES TO ANGER AND BITTERNESS

At times, you may try to justify your anger by saying, "God was angry (*Numbers 25:4*) and Jesus was angry (*Mark 3:5*), so I can be angry too." However, God is perfectly holy, and you are not. His holiness, justice, love, and perfection remain constant even though He is jealous (*Exodus 20:5*), has wrath (*II Chronicles 28:11*), exercises vengeance (*Romans 12:19*), and is indignant every day (*Psalms 7:11*). Unlike God, your flesh is in continual conflict between good and evil (*Romans 7:14-25*; *Galatians 5:17*). As a result, you will have difficulty responding to emotionally-charged situations without sinning.

#1

I. Some examples from Scripture of unbiblical deeds resulting from anger and bitterness

- A. Cain, in his anger, killed his brother. As a result, he became a vagrant and a wanderer (*Genesis 4:5-8, 11-12*).
- B. Simeon and Levi were self-willed men, murdering others in their cruel anger. As a result, their families were scattered (*Genesis 49:5-7*).
- C. Saul became angry and tried to kill his oldest son (*I Samuel 20:30-33*).
- D. Naaman became furious and refused to follow a simple command in order to be healed of leprosy. However, when he finally obeyed, he was healed (*II Kings 5:10-14*).
- E. Uzziah, confronted by the priests for his unfaithfulness to the Lord, became enraged and was struck with leprosy until the day of his death (*II Chronicles 26:16-23*).
- F. Jonah was greatly displeased and angry when the Lord showed compassion on Nineveh, and God subsequently rebuked and humbled him (*Jonah 4:1-11*).
- G. Simon, in his bitterness, tried to buy the authority of God and was openly rebuked by Peter (*Acts 8:14-24*).

#2

II. Some unbiblical ways of dealing with anger and bitterness

- A. You explode in a rage or temper, striking out physically or verbally at people or things (*this disregards Proverbs 16:32; Matthew 7:12; Romans 14:19; I Corinthians 13:4-5; Galatians 5:19-20, 22-23; Colossians 3:17*).
- B. You express anger outwardly ("ventilate your anger") by beating a pillow (or another inanimate object) while thinking (or speaking) about the person with whom you are angry or bitter (*this disregards Psalm 19:14; II Corinthians 10:5; Philippians 2:3-4, 4:8-9; Colossians 3:2*).
- C. You control your temper at work (in front of your boss) and at church (in front of Christian brothers and sisters), but you exercise little or no control at home with

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UNBIBLICAL RESPONSES TO ANGER AND BITTERNESS

- your loved ones (*this disregards Proverbs 25:28; Matthew 5:13-16, 7:12; Romans 12:9, 14:13; I Corinthians 13:4-5; Galatians 5:19-20, 22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3*).
- D. You exercise strenuously to release feelings of anger yet fail to deal with the sinful basis of your anger (*this disregards I Samuel 16:7; Mark 7:20-23; I Timothy 4:8*).
- E. You "lose your temper" by honking your horn in traffic, throwing objects, yelling at others, or thinking and speaking obscenities (*this disregards Proverbs 16:32; Matthew 5:16, 7:12; I Corinthians 13:4-5; Galatians 5:19-20, 22-23; Philippians 4:8-9; Colossians 3:17*).
- F. You seethe inwardly and become bitter (*this disregards Psalm 19:14; Proverbs 25:28; Philippians 4:8-9; Hebrews 12:15*).
- G. You verbally attack or slander individuals who persecute you or take advantage of you (*this disregards Matthew 5:10-12, 38-48; Romans 12:17-21, 13:10, 14:19, 15:2; Ephesians 4:29, 31-32; I Peter 2:20-25, 3:8-9*).
- H. You discuss everything about your anger or bitterness "to get in touch with your feelings" and to release repressed emotions ("catharsis") (*this disregards Matthew 15:18; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:17-25; Philippians 2:3-4, 3:13-14, 4:8-9*).
- I. You deny ("internalize") that you are angry or bitter (*this disregards Ephesians 4:15, 25; James 3:14, 5:16; I John 1:8-10*).
- J. You write vengeful letters to express your anger or bitterness but don't mail them (to combine "ventilation of anger" and "catharsis") (*this disregards Matthew 5:22-24, 44; Mark 11:25-26; Romans 12:9-21, 14:10-12; Ephesians 4:29; Philippians 2:3-4, 4:8-9*).
- K. You characterize your anger as "righteous indignation" and your bitterness as "justifiable" instead of biblically examining your anger and bitterness and responding accordingly (*this disregards Isaiah 5:20-21, 55:7-9; Matthew 7:1-5; Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15; James 1:19-25, 3:13-18*).

III. Some unbiblical justifications for anger or bitterness

- 4
- A. You claim that others and/or their actions are responsible for your anger or bitterness (*this disregards Ezekiel 18:20; Mark 7:20-23; I Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:12-14*).
- B. You claim that past, present, and possible future circumstances have led to your anger or bitterness (*this disregards Matthew 15:18-19; Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-29; James 1:2-4*).

Note: You are living to please yourself when you respond unbiblically to the sins of anger and bitterness (Review THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SELF, Lesson 4, Pages 5-10). As you focus on self, you may attempt to "solve" your problem of anger or bitterness; but this "solution" will be based on the wisdom of man. Trusting in man's wisdom leads to a further emphasis on self. (Review BASIC APPROACHES TO SOLVING PERSONAL PROBLEMS, Lesson 4, Page 11). Without relying solely on the Lord and His Word, you cannot overcome anger or bitterness in a manner that gives glory to God.

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF ANGER

If you fail to deal biblically with anger, increasing disobedience to Scripture is inevitable (*based on Genesis 4:5-8; I Samuel 18:7-9; Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 19:19, 29:22; Ephesians 4:26-27*). However, God's abundant resources and promises enable you to be an overwhelming conqueror as you deal biblically with the problem of anger in your life (*based on John 16:13, 23-24; Romans 8:31-39, esp. vs. 37; I Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 4:31-32; Philippians 1:6, 4:13; II Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:5; I John 3:22*).

I. Anger of God

- A. While Scripture describes God as angry (*Exodus 4:14, 22:24; Numbers 11:33, 25:4, 32:10-15; Deuteronomy 29:27-28, 32:16, 19-22; Joshua 23:16; I Kings 11:9; II Kings 22:13; Psalm 78:49-50, 90:7; Isaiah 30:27; Daniel 9:16*), He remains holy (*Leviticus 11:45; I Peter 1:16*) and without sin (*Job 34:10; Matthew 5:48; James 1:13*).
- B. God is slow to anger and simultaneously merciful, gracious, compassionate, forgiving, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth (*Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Nahum 1:3*).
- C. God's favor is for a lifetime, but His anger is for a moment (*Psalm 30:5*). He often restrains His anger (*Psalm 78:38*).
- D. God's anger is always directed at rebellion or disobedience to His commands, which are always holy and just (*Deuteronomy 29:14-21, 24-28; Psalm 78:21-22; Lamentations 3:42-43; Zephaniah 2:2-3; Romans 2:5; Hebrews 3:7-11*).

II. Anger of Jesus

- A. Jesus was angry at the hypocrisy and legalism of the religious leaders while simultaneously grieving over their hardness of heart. In spite of being angry, He healed a man (*Mark 3:5*).
- B. In the first cleansing of the Temple (*John 2:13-16*), Scripture does not teach that Jesus was angry but instead teaches that He was motivated by a divine jealousy (zeal) for His Father's house (*John 2:17*). Afterwards, He answered questions from the religious leaders (*John 2:18-21*). Nor is it recorded in Scripture that Jesus was angry at the second cleansing of the temple (*Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46*). After His actions on this occasion, He healed the sick and responded to questions of the religious leaders (*Matthew 21:14-16; Mark 11:17-18*).

III. Anger that is not sinful

- A. On extremely rare and exceptional occasions in Scripture, a person devoted to God was recorded as being angry with no accompanying sin (*for example: Exodus 16:20; Leviticus 10:16-20; I Samuel 11:6, 20:34; II Kings 13:19; Nehemiah 5:6; Job 32:2-5*).

8. Have an abiding (continuing) anger against another (*Matthew 5:21-22*) or let the sun go down on your anger (*i.e.*, fail to deal with your anger in a biblical manner but harbor it instead) (*Ephesians 4:26*).
 9. Respond to anger in a manner that does not please the Lord (*II Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 1:10*) or bring honor to His Name (*I Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17; I Peter 1:6-7*).
 10. Become angry and neglect to rejoice, to pray, or to give thanks in the very situation in which you find yourself (*I Thessalonians 5:16-18*).
- H. You also sin if you respond angrily in areas where Scripture has already told you how to act. For example, with regard to:
1. An enemy, you must look for and meet his needs (*Romans 12:20*) and show love to him (*Luke 6:35*);
 2. The civic authorities, you are to obey them and give to them what is due (*Romans 13:1-8; I Peter 2:13-15*), unless their demands contradict God's Word and would force you to sin (*Acts 4:19-20, 5:29*);
 3. An unreasonable supervisor, you are to submit (*I Peter 2:18*), except when doing so would cause you to disobey Scripture (*Genesis 39:7-9*);
 4. Your circumstances, you are to trust God and be content (*Ecclesiastes 7:14; Romans 8:28-29; Philippians 4:11-13; I Timothy 6:6-8*);
 5. Your trials, you are to cooperate with God and respond joyfully as He develops Christlike character in your life (*Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4*);
 6. Unjust treatment, you are patiently to endure and thus find favor with God (*I Peter 2:19-20*);
 7. Fellow-believers who are caught in sin, you are to restore them in gentleness (*Galatians 6:1*) and not regard them as enemies (*II Thessalonians 3:15*);
 8. Your parents (while they are in biblical authority over you), you are to obey them in a manner that pleases the Lord (*Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20*);
 9. Your children, you are not to provoke them to wrath but are to teach them with the discipline and instruction of the Lord (*Ephesians 6:4*);
 10. Husbands and wives, each is to submit to one another (*Ephesians 5:21*) and to love each other in a consistently biblical manner (*I Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4*); and
 11. Scripturally qualified church leaders, you are to obey them (*Hebrews 13:17*) and to esteem them highly in love (*I Thessalonians 5:12-13*).

V. Anger and the inner man

- A. Since your heart is revealed by your thoughts, words, and actions (*Matthew 12:34-35, 15:18-20; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 6:45*), sinful anger reveals that you are living to please yourself (*based on II Corinthians 5:15; Galatians 5:16-21; Colossians 1:10*).
- B. One who is slow to anger has great understanding (*Proverbs 14:29*), is better than the mighty (*Proverbs 16:32*), is able to pacify contention (*Proverbs 15:18*), and is obedient to God's Word (*James 1:19-20*).
- C. One who is wise turns away anger (*Proverbs 29:8*) and holds back his anger (*Proverbs 29:11*).