

Anger
Message 02 in the series, "Help, I'm Out of Control"

A. When God didn't respond the way Jonah expected, it made him furious. He had no control over the situation — his anger was the proof, and it made him look foolish.

"On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: 'Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!' The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow. When the king of Nineveh heard what Jonah was saying, he stepped down from his throne and took off his royal robes. He dressed himself in burlap and sat on a heap of ashes. Then the king and his nobles sent this decree throughout the city: 'No one, not even the animals from your herds and flocks, may eat or drink anything at all. People and animals alike must wear garments of mourning, and everyone must pray earnestly to God. They must turn from their evil ways and stop all their violence. Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will change his mind and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us.' When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened. This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. So he complained to the LORD about it: 'Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. Just kill me now, LORD! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen.' The LORD replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry about this?' Then Jonah went out to the east side of the city and made a shelter to sit under as he waited to see what would happen to the city. And the LORD God arranged for a leafy plant to grow there, and soon it spread its broad leaves over Jonah's head, shading him from the sun. This eased his discomfort, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But God also arranged for a worm! The next morning at dawn the worm ate through the stem of the plant so that it withered away. And as the sun grew hot, God arranged for a scorching east wind to blow on Jonah. The sun beat down on his head until he grew faint and wished to die. 'Death is certainly better than living like this!' he exclaimed. Then God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?' 'Yes,' Jonah retorted, 'even angry enough to die!' Then the LORD said, 'You feel sorry about the plant, though you did nothing to put it there. It came quickly and died quickly. But Nineveh has more than 120,000 people living in spiritual darkness, not to mention all the animals. Shouldn't I feel sorry for such a great city?'" Jonah 3:4-10, 4:1-11 (NLT)

"Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool." Ecclesiastes 7:9 (NLT)

Three things to remember when you feel anger:

1. When I feel anger rising, I need to remember I don't have to react immediately.

"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires."

James 1:19-20 (NLT)

Note: Just because I feel it doesn't mean I have to release it.

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." Ephesians 4:26 (ESV)

Note: Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit.

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!"

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

2. When I feel disrespected or wronged, I need to remember God is my defender.

“Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, ‘I will take revenge; I will pay them back,’ says the LORD.” Romans 12:19 (NLT)

“For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.” 1 Peter 2:21–23 (NLT)

3. When I feel justified in my anger, I need to remember unresolved anger comes with a cost!

“And ‘don’t sin by letting anger control you.’ Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.” Ephesians 4:26–27 (NLT)

Note: Forgiveness is a practice, not a feeling.

“Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’ ‘No, not seven times,’ Jesus replied, ‘but seventy times seven!’”
Matthew 18:21-22 (NLT)

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.” Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

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