

Intro –

Last week I introduced a 3 part miniseries from the end of Ephesians 4 on real change in 5 common areas of struggle. We lying last week as well as gave a Biblical model for change. I'll review that model here in a moment in case you missed it. Today will focus on the next two struggles in Ephesians: Anger and stealing.

Robert Jones, *Uprooting Anger*, "Anger is a universal problem, prevalent in every culture, experienced by every generation. No one is isolated from its presence or immune from its poison. It permeates each person and spoils our most intimate relationships. Anger is a given part of our fallen human fabric.

Jerry Bridges adds the observation that our anger is *often* directed toward those we should love the most: our spouse, children, parents, siblings in our human families, and those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ in our church families.

Overview of Ephesians

Identity (1:1-23) You are secure as God's beloved, adopted child in Christ.

Biography (2:1-10) God rescued you from the penalty and power of sin and made you alive with Christ.

Community (2:11-4:16) God placed you in the church, the body of Christ.

Transformation (4:17-6:24) You can (and must!) live a new life consistent with your new identity in Christ.

1. A Biblical Model of Change: The Y-Diagram – "Heart Chart"

a. The goal – pleasing God

- i. **2 Corinthians 5:9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

b. The heart – Mt. 15:19

The heart is the control center of the person. It is your desires, wants, will, volition, lusts, mind, thoughts, intentions, motives

Matthew 15:18-19 "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

When we get a new heart, we get a complete change of values and thoughts

Ezekiel 36:26-27 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

The heart of every problem is a problem of the heart.

Our actions proceed from our thinking, our outer life proceeds from our inner life.

Apart from a new heart, we will consistently veer away from pleasing God.

With a new heart, there is still a battle that rages in our hearts.

Romans 6 – we are no longer slaves to sin but we can present ourselves to sin as if it is our master.

- c. Thinking proceeds from the heart
 - i. What are you dwelling on? What are you focused on? How are you talking to yourself?
 - ii. Example – Phil 4 on anxiety and worry urges focused thought on what is true, honorable, etc.
 - 1. **Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.
 - iii. Or are you chewing on and listening to your desires or wrong ideas?
- d. Choice
 - i. Reach a point of decision and it may go quick!
 - ii. The choice comes down to this: Who will I seek to please?
 - 1. God or self? 2 Corinthians 5:9
- e. Commandment vs. feeling oriented
 - i. Choosing to please myself is feeling oriented.
 - 1. This person/decision is driven by emotions.
 - ii. Choosing to please God is Commandment oriented/principle oriented
 - 1. Considers, what does God want me to do? What is right? What is commanded?
 - a. Even if it is an emotionally difficult thing to do.
 - 2. How do I increasingly grow to chose this path instead of the other?
 - a. Know the Word
 - b. Be in community with growing believers
- f. Easy/hard
 - i. Following our self/emotions is easier in the moment, but it gets harder down the road of the decision.
 - 1. **Hebrews 11:25** choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
 - 2. **Galatians 6:7** Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.
 - 3. **Proverbs 13:15** Good understanding produces favor, But the way of the treacherous is hard.
 - ii. Following God/commandment is harder in the moment, but it gets easier down the road of the decision.
 - 1. **Proverbs 4:18** But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

2. **Matthew 11:30** "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

g. **Results – deeds of the flesh vs. fruit of the Spirit**

i. **Galatians 5:19-24**

ii. Can't just jump in at the point of the actions and swap them out.

1. Can work backwards from the sin

a. What choice did I make? What was I thinking? What role did God's Word play in my decision? What desires were ruling my heart?

2. Resolve sinful anger **quickly**. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

a. Anger identifies something in your world that **matters** to you, and it proclaims that something is **wrong**. (David Powlison)

i. Minor as being served a cup of cold coffee or as major as your spouse running off with your best friend. Your car won't start in the morning after you just had it fixed. Your boss puts another assignment on your desk when you can't find the time to finish what you already have to do.

ii. God is angry with sinners and their sin.

1. **Psalm 7:11** God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.

2. **Exodus 4:14** Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses...

3. But He is slow to anger

a. **Exodus 34:6** Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;

4. His anger is perfect, pure, settled opposition to evil.

iii. Anger is our God-given capacity to respond to a wrong that we think is important. God also gets angry at things that are wrong in this world. Your capacity to be angry is an expression of being made in His image . . . One difference between our anger and God's anger is that, since we aren't always holy and pure, we often get angry at things that **aren't true wrongs** and **don't really matter** to anyone but us. (David Powlison)

iv. Frustrated, bothered, upset, irritated – just different words but all are reactions to some perceived unfairness or injustice.

1. Different in degree not kind

b. We must not sin in the **motivation** or **expression** of our anger. (4:26a)

Probably not a command ***to be angry*** but a description of how to act in our anger – let it not be mixed with sin and resolve it quickly.

i. My anger can be sinful in motivation (i.e. the reason I get angry)

1. **What do I want that I'm not getting or what am I getting that I don't want?**

2. Consider your desires that are ruling you or being thwarted, are you motivated by a love of god or self? What desires have become demands?

a. I must have respect

b. I must have my Saturday free to do whatever I please

c. My children must not make me look bad

- d. My life must be free from pain and difficulty
- ii. My anger can be sinful in expression
 - 1. **Proverbs 29:22** An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.
 - 2. **At least 3 different ways people give vent to their anger.**
 - a. Passively
 - i. Going to your room and pouting, stewing, retreating into silence, shutting the other person out.
 - b. Verbally
 - i. **1 Samuel 20:30** Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"
 - ii. Loud yelling, attacking, intimidating.
 - c. Physically
 - i. Abusing, hitting, striking out.
 - ii. Men, there is no place for physical abuse from a Christian man. Ladies, if your husband hits you, there is no virtue in remaining silent about it.
 - iii. Parents, don't discipline your children in anger
- c. We must resolve our anger **daily**. (4:26b)

If expressly literal than must resolve by 5:00 pm in the winter but you have all the way until 10 pm in the summer months to stew in your anger.

When we don't resolve anger we allow it to stew and grow into bitterness. More detail on this next week.

Wayne Mack: Read about a counseling situation in which a man said he was divorcing his wife because she didn't close the dresser drawers. He would walk into his bedroom and around the corner into a stomach full of dresser drawers. Granted, that would be obnoxious, but do you think that was the real issue? He was probably upset about a thousand things he had allowed to pile up without addressing. The drawers were simply the focal point of his anger. (Mack 40)

Mack writes that "whenever we see a person responding with an unusual amount of emotion and anger to what most people would consider a miniscule thing, we can be sure that person has had much unexpressed anger simmering under the surface from prior events."

Three right ways to respond when tempted to anger:

- 1. **Evaluate** the situation and determine you are **wrong** to be angry.
 - a. Realize you had an unexpressed expectation that your husband or wife couldn't fulfill because they didn't even know about it! Or you were believing that life should be easy and things should never break.
- 2. Choose to **overlook** the offense.
 - a. **1 Peter 4:8** Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

- b. **Proverbs 19:11** A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.
 - c. *We do have a responsibility to sharpen each other like iron, so why does the Bible say it is appropriate to cover or overlook a sin sometimes?*
 - i. Growth takes time, and if we point out every personal transgression of our spouse or friends our relationship could become nothing more than fault finding.
 - ii. Consider whether the behavior of the other person that is stirring up anger in you is a pattern or an aberration. Consider if there are extenuating circumstances that should lead you to show grace.
 - 3. Find a God-pleasing, productive **solution**.
 - a. Gently and lovingly confront the person with whom we are angry.
 - i. **Matthew 18:15** "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.
 - b. Work to respond to the evil (child abuse, human-trafficking, etc.)
 - i. Pray, research, give, support – but don't merely stew
 - d. Unresolved anger exposes us to greater **temptation**. (4:27)
 - i. Satan can fan the flames of bitterness
 - 1. **Ephesians 6:11, 16** Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil . . . ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*.
 - e. **Applying the Y-diagram/Heart Chart**
 - i. My main goal – be pleasing to Christ (2 Cor 5:9)
 - 1. Not . . . be seen as correct, be fully understood, have everything go my way, find the path of least resistance
 - ii. What is going on in my heart?
 - 1. After recognizing that I am getting angry, ask some question –
 - a. What am I not getting that I want or what am I getting that I don't want?
 - i. Respect, comfort, free time, inclusion, intimacy, money, peace, safety
 - b. Realize that circumstances may tempt you to be angry but they can never cause you to be angry. The cause lies in our own hearts. (Summary of Jerry Bridges)
 - iii. What am I thinking about? What are my thoughts focused on?
 - 1. Do the thoughts flowing out of my heart focus on me, my expectations, and my desires?
 - 2. Do they focus on God's glory in a difficult situation? How can I please Christ?
 - iv. Choice – please God or self
 - 1. What does the Word say my options are?
 - a. Don't need to pretend not to be angry (that would be lying!)
 - b. **Proverbs 19:19** *A man of great anger will bear the penalty, For if you rescue him, you will only have to do it again.*

c. **James 1:19-20** *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

2. What are my emotions pulling me towards? Emotions aren't bad but don't let them pull the train!
3. How difficult it is for anger to be righteous from the heart all the way through to the actions!

v. Helpful resources

1. *Anger and Stress Management God's Way* by Wayne Mack
2. *Uprooting Anger* by Robert Jones
3. Anger booklets in our resource center

3. Replace theft with **labor** and **generosity** (4:28)

a. God prohibits **stealing**.

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal.

Exodus 22:1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

Hosea 4:1-3 Listen to the word of the LORD, O sons of Israel, For the LORD has a case against the inhabitants of the land, Because there is no faithfulness or kindness Or knowledge of God in the land. 2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed. 3 Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes Along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, And also the fish of the sea disappear.

This includes shoplifting, larceny, breaking into cars and homes. It includes theft from the office of supplies that don't belong to you for personal use. Theft of time by burning hours at work on Facebook or shopping outside of legitimate breaks or lunch time.

b. Legitimate labor is a God-honoring means of **provision**.

Proverbs 13:11 Wealth *obtained* by fraud dwindles, But the one who gathers by labor increases *it*.

Proverbs 14:23 In all labor there is profit, But mere talk *leads* only to poverty.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, ¹² so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

Blue collar, white collar, minimum wage, executive salary – there is biblical dignity in working to provide for yourself.

c. Christians must move from stealing to **giving**.

- i. This is where the difficult application may come in. Not merely ceasing to steal but working to provide for yourself AND having something to give.
- ii. Self-focused materialism met through dishonest means with self-focused materialism met through honest means is not enough!

1. That's certainly a big improvement though!

- iii. **1 Timothy 6:17-19** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

d. Applying the Y-diagram/Heart Chart

4. Next Steps for Real Change

- a. Read through ***Proverbs*** and make note of verses related to anger or laziness vs. diligence.
 - i. 20 on anger, 33+ on laziness/diligence
 - ii. If we were sitting across the table talking about this issue and you wanted to see real change in your life, this is what I would encourage you to do. Read through Proverbs over the next month. Identify the warnings of anger, the benefit of self-control, etc.
- b. Be grateful for Jesus' perfect patience and righteous anger ***credited*** to you.
 - i. Most of us find that when we start really looking for sinful anger in our lives, we see it everywhere. It can get overwhelming! Great opportunity to remind yourself of the gospel.
 - ii. **Philippians 3:9** . . . not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,
 - iii. "Your goal should not be to find *the* answer to your struggle, as if you could solve an anger problem once and for all. Instead, your struggle with anger will prove to be the door through which you learn to depend on God. Your irritability shows you how much you need God. Because of it you can see that you need His mercy, His forgiveness, and His help every day." David Powlison