

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 3: ANGER AND PRIDE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Forgiveness and Reconciliation. It can be difficult to accept God's forgiveness in our lives and extend forgiveness to others. Forgiving others goes against our natural inclination. But as we allow God to change our hearts and minds, we can experience reconciliation with God and with one another. This module explores the Biblical foundations of forgiveness, the process required for reconciliation, and how to promote living at peace with one another. It also examines forgiveness as it may be required between individuals or members of a community.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God. The lessons will be especially helpful to those who are pastors, church leaders, mentors or teachers, but also anyone wishing to grow in their relationship with God.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

LESSON 3: ANGER AND PRIDE

PURPOSE

This lesson will examine possible barriers in the forgiveness and reconciliation process, and how to overcome these with the help of God. Anger and pride hinder forgiveness, disrupt reconciliation and the unity of God's people.

LEADER'S NOTE

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not easy. They are not as simple as saying, "I forgive you", but actually require a change of heart and behaviour. To that end, it can be difficult to remove all the obstacles that stand in the way. One of the most difficult obstacles is anger over what someone has done to us. In some cultures, anger is acceptable and even seen as devotion to God. We must be careful to see anger for what it is: an expression of judgement. If we are not careful, we may be seeking vengeance and retribution, justifying them as righteous or holy. Similarly, pride can get in the way of seeking or offering forgiveness. If you have stories from your own life or community that illustrate the obstacles of pride and anger in the forgiveness process, please share them with your participants. We learn more from the experiences of others. Without relevant stories this topic becomes theoretical.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ What relatively insignificant habit in someone tends to make you angry? Why might a small offence cause anger in one person and not in another?
- ❖ When you are angry, what happens? Do you keep it inside? Yell or stomp? How can you tell you are angry?
- ❖ We use the word 'pride' in different ways, sometimes to express pleasure in our accomplishments, our country, our family, etc. Extreme personal pride in one's self can indicate a lack of humility and is often seen as a negative thing. What is the difference? Is there such a thing as good and bad pride?
- ❖ Does anger or pride bring about anything positive in our lives?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH:

- ❖ **Anger and Pride as Obstacles to Reconciliation:** Imagine someone coming to you and asking for forgiveness. Knowing that God commands us to forgive, is there anything that stands in your way? When we are hesitant to forgive someone (or ask someone to forgive us), it is often because our anger or pride prevent us from doing so. It is not possible to forgive someone with whom we are still angry. And it is virtually impossible to truly ask for forgiveness if we are proud.
 - Read these verses from the Bible. What do they say about anger and pride restricting our ability to love and be reconciled to others?
 - o [Ecclesiastes 7:9](#)
 - o [James 1:19-20](#)
 - o [Proverbs 15:18](#)
 - o [1 Peter 3:11](#)

ASK:

What other emotions or attitudes keep us from love and reconciliation after sin has broken a relationship?

Why might Satan attempt to keep us from reconciliation with one another, and what are some of the tools he might use?

Is there a healthy expression of anger? Or is it always negative?

- ❖ **The Problem with Anger:** Anger is an intense emotional response to something perceived as negative. At its very heart, anger is the emotion of judgement. We have been given the capacity for anger, but the danger comes when we lose self-control and lash out, or become habitually angry people.
 - **Anger is often misplaced:** When we direct our judgement and anger towards people (individually or collectively) we are sinning. God is the only righteous judge. Our judgement is imperfect at best. We can be angry with sin, Satan or evil in the world, but not with people. Rightly placed, righteous anger can help us combat sin in the world. Wrongly placed, it destroys relationships.
 - **God's anger is righteous:** It is mentioned over 50 times in the book of Romans alone that God expresses anger! Sin is what angers God because it is wrong and devastates His creation. He alone is in a position to judge perfectly. When God is angry, He does not sin.
 - **Anger leads to revenge:** We sin when we judge others and in anger, try to get even with them – an eye for an eye! We desire revenge, but the Bible tells us that revenge should be reserved for God alone.



- **Anger judges others:** When we are angry, it is often because someone failed to meet our expectations. Sometimes what we expect is good, such as when a parent expects obedience from a child, or a wife expects faithfulness from her husband. However, when these expectations are not met, anger arises in us and we judge them.
- **Anger hurts others:** When we feel angry about something, we often do or say things we would not normally do. This may involve physical violence, yelling, or saying hurtful words. When we are angry, we feel the desire to take revenge on someone for the way they offended us, punishing them in some manner. This never blesses; it only harms others.

TASK:

Divide participants into 4 groups. Assign each group one of the passages below to read and discuss, using the questions as a guide. They can then report what they learned. Alternatively, if you have a small number of participants, have them work on all the verses together. Ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the discussion by sharing their views.

- Read the following verses:
 1. [James 4:11-12](#)
 2. [Matthew 7:1-5](#)
 3. [1 Corinthians 6:1-8](#)
 4. [Romans 2:1-3](#)
- Answer the following questions:
 - o Are we to judge others?
 - o Who are we allowed to judge, and what must we do for ourselves first?
 - o What will happen to us if we judge others?
 - o What happens to our ability to judge wisely when we are angry?
 - o What is the purpose of judging others? Can it be accomplished with anger? [See James 1:19-20.](#)

TEACH:

- ❖ **Combatting Anger:** We should learn to resist anger just as we would anything else that leads to sin in our life.
 - **Put anger aside:** Anger can fuel sinful judgement which does not lead to love, grace and forgiveness. For this reason, we must recognize anger within us and restrain it as quickly as possible. We can do this by choosing grace and love instead of revenge and wrath. When anger becomes a habit, we become angry people who are controlled by sin.
 - **Know where it comes from:** We can't always change our circumstances, and we have no authority to change others. But we can change what is inside us that triggers our anger. We must take ownership of our anger, recognizing that it comes from inside, not outside. We might believe that someone else has 'made us angry'. However,



anger is simply our emotional response to what they have done. We can choose another response. No one has the power to make us feel anything.

- **Change what we can:** Anger is often an expression of our desire to control, rather than letting God control. When someone does not meet our expectations, we can either recognize that our expectations are unreasonable or possibly wrong, OR that this person is unable to meet them. Since we cannot change others, we must change our response to these expectations. If it is in our ability to help them do better next time, we should do so with love.
- **Practise love:** When we pray for those who have hurt and angered us, revenge is replaced with love. When we accept them rather than expecting more from them, we extend grace. Love and grace will lead to righteousness, whereas anger and wrath never can.
 - [2 Corinthians 10:3-5](#)
 - [Ephesians 4:31](#)
 - [Ephesians 4:26](#)
- ❖ **The Problem with Pride:** Pride is thinking too much and too highly of one's self. It is the opposite of humility. Just as people who judge others are prone to anger, those who are proud are easily offended and find it impossible to forgive others, or repent so that they can be forgiven.
 - **Proud people are easily offended:** Anything negative said or done against a proud person is not usually tolerated since they consider themselves perfect and important. If we do not think too highly of ourselves, we are able to withstand criticism without becoming angry. We must recognize we have value as God's creation, but our value and worth are not greater than that others. Our very pride can stir up strife and make a bigger problem of something that was a small offense.
 - [Proverbs 21:24, Proverbs 28:25](#)
 - **Proud people cannot forgive or accept forgiveness:** When we are self-focused it is difficult to accept the forgiveness of others because to do so means admitting we were wrong. We do not like to admit our sin. Pride keeps us from repentance and asking for forgiveness from others. It also prevents us from forgiving others, because to do so would mean we have to let go of our right to hold them indebted to us for their offence.
 - **Proud people cannot offer grace:** Those who have been forgiven through God's grace are able to extend that grace and forgiveness to others. If we are full of pride, we do not admit our own sin before God and hold others to an impossible standard. This then leads to more anger on our part.
- ❖ **Combatting Pride:** Each of us will deal with pride and anger to some degree in our life. There are some practical ways to combat pride and get proper perspective on ourselves and our circumstances.



- **Think rightly about yourself:** Remember that you are a sinner who has been saved by God's grace. We must honour Jesus for any righteousness or good deeds that we possess. It is not through our own efforts that we achieve these qualities!
 - o [Romans 12:3](#)
 - o [Galatians 6:3](#)
 - o [Titus 3:5](#)

- **Talk less about yourself, more about others:** Practise the habit of considering the needs of others. When you are tempted to boast about yourself, choose someone else to praise instead. Ask them questions about themselves rather than talking about what you have done. It takes practice!
 - o [Proverbs 27:2](#)
 - o [Proverbs 29:23](#)
 - o [Matthew 12:36-37](#)

- **Practise giving honour to others:** Each day, look for an opportunity to serve others – in your own household, workplace or community. Think of their needs and what they are going through, and how you can make their life better. It must be an intentional decision to act in ways that benefit others. This habit will help us be more empathetic and less selfish.
 - o [Philippians 2:3](#)
 - o [Romans 12:10](#)

- **Choose community over isolation:** Sometimes we falsely think we are better than others; however, this is often because we do not know them or their struggles. When we isolate ourselves from others, we can be fooled into thinking we are superior to them. Spending time with people and sharing with them on a deep level will develop friendships that can be mutually beneficial.
 - o [Colossians 3:12-13](#)
 - o [Galatians 6:2](#)

- ❖ **Practical Advice about Anger and Pride:** Our sin and selfish nature can destroy relationships in our life. In order to be restored to one another, we must forgive as Christ has forgiven us. This is difficult if we have fallen into a pattern of wrath, rage and anger. When we feel anger coming on, here are some suggestions:
 - **Move your body:** Sometimes we need to snap ourselves out of a conditioned angry response to the behaviour of others. When we feel rage and anger coming on, turn away from the confrontation or go for a walk to avoid doing something hurtful. Other reactions in the moment of anger may be looking up instead of down, shaking your hands or head, or deeply sighing or making a neutral noise such as clearing your throat or saying 'hmm'. Use this neutral reaction to pause. When you recognize that anger is building, choose not to react negatively.



- **Refocus:** Some people are helped by closing their eyes to block the visual stimulus that has caused the anger. Others are helped by deep breathing which slows the heart rate and increases oxygen flow. It will help us remain calm. In order to breathe deeply:
 - o Stand or sit up straight.
 - o Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Feel your belly expanding. Breathe slowly. Inhale to a count of three, and exhale the same.
 - o Repeat several times (at least 5 to 10).
- **Figure out what you want:** Identify what it is that has caused you to feel angry. What do you want that you are not getting? What would you rather have happen? Write it out on a piece of paper. Be specific. Then decide whether or not your expectation is realistic. Remember you can only change yourself – not other people!
- **Replace negative with positive:** When you feel a negative thought enter your mind about someone, choose something positive to think about them. Speak those thoughts out loud. If it is sin that outrages you, name it and remember that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ redeems sinners. Pray that God would deal with that sin, and bring the sinner to repentance.
- **Pray:** Give your anger to God and ask Him to give you peace. Remember that you are just as capable of hurting others, so rely on Him for grace and forgiveness. Ask God to give you love for others, patience with them, and opportunities to serve them.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ What should our reaction be to sin and injustice in the world? Some people suggest that anger is good in that it fuels us to combat sin. What other emotional responses could also have the same affect? (What about compassion, sorrow, empathy, love?)
- ❖ What calms you down when you are angry? Is there a Bible verse you could memorize to remind yourself of the right response?
- ❖ Why is it sometimes difficult to ask for forgiveness or to forgive someone who asks us? What can you do about this?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that each participant would clearly see the roles that anger and pride play in their life, and that they would desire to be free of them. Pray that they would not be angry people, led by their emotions rather than by the truth. Pray that they would see the value of compassionate hearts and forgiving spirits.