

REDLINED • Week 2: Anger

Daily Briefing • Day 4 of 5 • The Heart of the Issue

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

James 1:19–20

On Sunday we walked through five responses to selfish anger. Today we go underneath all five, to the origin of the anger. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I pray that You would show me what I actually want, and then act miraculously to change it. I confess that I have wanted things You never promised me and things this life will never be able to give. Show me who You are, what this world is, and what I am. Change my desires, my values, and my loyalties, so that I want You, Your kingdom, Your Son, Your Spirit, Your Word, Your mission, Your methods, Your morals, and Your message more than I want the things I think will satisfy my soul. I cannot manufacture this in myself. I am asking You to do it. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

On Sunday we said that anger comes from unmet desires. That was not an inference somebody drew from the text. It is what the text explicitly says. James asks where the fighting comes from, and he does not answer with external circumstances or with another person's behavior. He says it came from within. "You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel" (James 4:2). Something was wanted, it was not delivered, and the conflict followed. So if we are going to deal with anger at the root instead of the surface, we have to deal with desire.

Which raises the question this briefing exists to answer. Where do desires live? Scripture puts them in the heart, and that word ("heart") has to be defined, because our culture has emptied it out until it means little more than feelings. In the Bible the *heart* is the seat of your desires, your values, and your loyalties. It is not a synonym for emotion. It is the control center, and there is a verse for each part of it.

Start with desires. "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity" (Romans 1:24), and from the other direction, "Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). Move to values. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Then take loyalties. When Solomon went wrong, the text does not say his schedule slipped. It says his wives "turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God" (1 Kings 11:4).

Which means anger is not a behavior problem, and it is not an environmental problem either. It is a problem of loyally desiring what we value, and loyalty, desire, and value are all heart issues. That is why behavior modification keeps failing to alleviate your anger. You can get better at not slamming the door while the thing producing the door slamming sits completely untouched deep within.

James makes this move himself, and he makes it in the same paragraph as the passage we've already looked at. Five verses after he traces the fighting back to desire, he writes, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). The passage that names the cause also names the cure. James does not send us anywhere else to find it.

Here is the specific problem with what I want. I want more than God has promised me, and I want more than this life is able to deliver in a run of seventy or eighty years. "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10). I keep demanding a level of comfort, control, recognition, and fairness that this world has never delivered to anybody. Even people who had those things in abundance still wanted more. But I still get angry when this world does not deliver it to me.

Let us assume the best about people here. Most of us who want the wrong things did not choose that on purpose. We have five things wrong in our minds. (1) We have God wrong, so we do not actually want Him. (2) We have this world wrong, both what it was meant to be and what it has fallen to, so we keep expecting Eden or Heaven from a sin-fractured reality. (3) We have humans wrong, so we believe we deserve what we are demanding. (4) We have human cravings wrong, which are actually things like knowing God, meaning, significance, mission, peace, and love. (5) We have wrong how completely the promises, pursuits, pleasures, and possessions of this world fail to deliver a single one of those cravings.

But it is not only bad information, and this is where the charitable version stops being accurate. Paul says we do not merely lack the truth. We push it away. Men “by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Romans 1:18), and they “exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). The verse about the lusts of the heart sits between those two. So we do not simply have these five beliefs wrong. We have traded them, and we traded them because the false versions let us keep wanting what we already wanted all along.

Which means the fix is not more discipline. The fix is truth. You go into God’s Word to see who God actually is, what this world was meant to be and what it has fallen to, what you actually are, what you actually crave, and what actually satisfies your human cravings. When you see those clearly (through God’s eyes rather than your own), what you want begins to change. You start wanting Him. You start wanting His kingdom, His Word, His mission, His morals, and His methods. New desires produce new drives, new values, and a different set of emotions attached to a different set of outcomes.

And this is not something you generate by trying harder. It is something God does, and He promised to do it.

Ezekiel 36:26–27

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

So here is where the week lands. You are not going to manage your anger into submission. You are going to want different things, or you are going to keep getting angry about the same desires going unmet. Ask God for the new heart, then go read the Word that reshapes what you believe.

READ & MEDITATE

James 4:1–3

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Read it slowly and notice that James never once looks outside the angry person for the cause. Then read verse 8 of the same chapter, where he tells us what to do about it, and notice that he does not say to try harder or scream into a pillow or some other pop-psychology Band-Aid. He says to draw near to God and have our hearts purified. Then read Ezekiel 36:26–27 again and notice who is doing the verbs. Every one of them belongs to God.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

The heart is the seat of your desires, your values, and your loyalties. Anger surfaces when something in there is not getting what it demands.

Take the thing you were angriest about this week and write down what you wanted. Write the want, not the event.

Anger is not a behavior problem and it is not an environmental problem. It is a problem of loyalty desiring what we value.

Where have you been blaming your circumstances for something that came out of your heart?

Fill in the blank from James 4:2:

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You _____ and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. (James 4:2)

**These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

Of the five things we wrongly understand (who God is, what this world is, what we ourselves are, what we actually crave, and what this world's promises can deliver), which one is furthest out of line in you right now?

What we are actually after is knowing God, meaning, significance, mission, peace, and love. We keep going after those through the promises, pursuits, pleasures, and possessions of a world that cannot supply any of them.

Name one thing you have been demanding from this life that this life is never going to give you.

Ezekiel does not tell us to try harder. He says God gives a new heart, puts His Spirit within us, and causes us to walk in His statutes.

Name what you wanted this week that produced your anger. Now name what God wants for you in that same situation, and write down how far apart the two are. Then rate yourself from one to ten on how closely your desires, your values, and your loyalties line up with God's. Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. Ask God for the new heart He promised, and ask Him to change what you want rather than only what you do.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite James 1:19–20 from memory:
