

Anger
Matthew 5:21-26

Introduction: In the passage that we looked at last week, Jesus said that unless we have a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees that we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:20). As we move into the next section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus helps us understand what this deeper righteousness looks like by giving several specific examples. He presents six antithetical statements each with the basic structure of "You have heard . . . but I say." In doing so He gives us insight into the kind of righteousness that Jesus' apprentices are to have. Today, we begin looking at the first of these examples in which Jesus addresses the true righteousness to which the sixth commandment points.

Opening Discussion: Do you think we have become a more angry culture? Why or why not?

Read Matthew 5:21-26

1. What sticks out to you from this passage?
2. What seems to have been the traditional understanding of the sixth commandment?
3. How does Jesus challenge this traditional understanding?
4. In verse 22, Jesus talks about being guilty before courts because of anger. Do you think He is talking about guilt before actual human courts or guilt before God? Why?
5. Based on this passage, how would you summarize God's view of anger?

Brian said:

I'm sure some of you are thinking, "Didn't Jesus get angry? Isn't anger okay sometimes?" The answer is yes. There were times that Jesus got angry (e.g. Matt 21:12ff; Mark 3:1ff). But Jesus' anger was never over any personal offense suffered. Rather it was at sin and injustice. In fact, when Jesus was most abused during his trial and crucifixion, He did not have malice or contempt or anger. Rather there were gracious words of forgiveness. And so, certainly there is a kind of anger directed towards injustice and sin that can be appropriate, but the reality is that most of the anger we experience doesn't fall into that category. Most of our anger results from personal offenses - our rights are violated or our goals are blocked or we experience irritations or we feel misunderstood and we get angry. This kind of anger is worthy of condemnation and must be put away.

6. Do you agree that most of the anger we experience is not over sin and injustice, but over some kind of personal offense? Why or why not?

7. How do you know whether the anger you are experiencing is sinful or not?

Brian said:

I guess what I'm saying is that if you see anger in your life, it is an indication that something is broken in your relationship with God. Something is not right. Dealing with your anger might be more about dealing with your relationship with God than directly with your anger.

8. Why do you think anger in your life might reveal that something is not right in your relationship with God?

9. What do you sense God is saying to you through this study?

10. Where do you sense the biggest need for addressing anger in your life?