

HDC ONLINE ANGER MANAGEMENT CLASS—LESSON TWO WHAT FUELS OUR ANGER...ANGER TRIGGERS

INTRO: In our last session we pointed out that anger is a secondary emotion—it is fueled by something else—anger is like the flashing red light on your dashboard telling you there’s something wrong under the hood of your life. Anger is the tip of the iceberg above the water but there’s a lot more under the surface of that anger that is going on. In this session we will look at some different things that can fuel and trigger our anger!

WHAT FUELS OUR ANGER?

It is vital to realize, from a theological perspective, that sinful expressions of anger are rooted in what the Bible calls our _____. This is vital to understand as it affects one’s approach to anger management in distinction to secular approaches that leave this element out. The approach in this curriculum is based on a person’s relationship to Jesus Christ and one’s desire to glorify God in their conduct (a lot of the first lesson dealt with this).

Galatians 5:13-26

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. **16** So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

The key to overcoming sinful expressions of anger is living in obedience to how God, in His Word, has commanded us to conduct our daily lives, and learning how to live in tune with God’s Holy Spirit so we can do just that. In this and

following lessons we will gain the wisdom and tools to live in victory over sinful anger.

What are some of the common events or situations that “tempt” us (our flesh) to react with various levels of wrongful anger? Biblical writers and counselors list the following common causes:

1. _____ – A perceived _____ has been violated.

In our culture (western world at large) personal rights is a very big issue. We are all about civil rights, women’s rights, voting rights, workplace rights, free speech rights and on and on the list could go. When we feel one of our rights has been violated we start feeling angry. What we do with that angry feeling makes all the difference!

2. _____ – All of us have expectations on what life should be like; on a daily basis as well as long term plans and dreams. Frustration (at varying levels of intensity) occurs when those expectations get blocked or are unmet over a period of time. This can provide a lot of fuel for anger! There are several factors that can lower our frustration tolerance:

- _____. When our stress-level increases, our tolerance for frustration decreases. This is why there are so many domestic disputes and divorces over financial problems.
- _____. Physical and emotional pain lowers our frustration tolerance. This is because we are so focused on taking care of our survival needs, that we do not have time for anything or anyone else.
- _____. Drugs and alcohol affect how our brain processes information and can make a person more irritable or bring forward repressed emotions or memories that can trigger anger.
- _____. Recent irritations can also be called "having a bad day." It's the little irritations that add up during the course of the day that lower our tolerance for frustration. Recent irritations can be: stepping in a puddle, spilling coffee on your shirt, being late for work, being stuck in a traffic jam, having a flat tire.

3. _____ —When we experience rejection, hurtful or unjust criticism, or emotional pain, sometimes we choose aggression and anger to fight back. This anger can become a wall we often erect to direct attention away from ourselves and our imperfections. This anger is quite often a very quick response.

4. _____ – When we feel threatened in the area of our self-esteem or personal security, fear and anxiety from this can fuel anger toward the source.

5. _____ – In some cases, anger may be a learned response. This behavior may be acquired in one's upbringing, from peers, or obsession, i.e., with a movie stars behavior that one wants to imitate.

Once we realize some of the things that generally fuel our anger, it is very helpful to identify what is/are the main trigger(s) for the sinful expressions of our anger. Understanding what our triggers are is a big step toward victory over anger.

Proverbs 14:29

Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

Anger can be triggered by different things such as:

A _____.

A _____.

A _____.

A Situation

If you tend to get angered by situations more than people or things, is it the same situation each time or different situations? Are there any common factors in the situations that make you angry?

A Person

If you tend to get angered by people more than situations or things, is it the same person or people each time or just people in general. Personal attacks (toward us or our ideas opinions etc.) from others can often trigger anger.

A Thing

If you tend to get angered by things more than situations or people, is it the same thing each time? For example, machines (i.e. computers, mobile phones) that don't work properly are a common cause of anger and they are often things that we want to use rather than avoid.

➔ Another way of looking at triggers is to consider them as: _____ or _____ issues.

- External triggers are things that happen _____. Someone may lie to us, put us down, cut us off on the highway, cut in line, certain mannerisms or habits others have, etc.
- Internal triggers are the messages we often _____. This can be called “self-talk” that gets us all worked up. Often these messages are based on assumptions or incorrect information. We say things to ourselves like, “She’s late because she doesn’t respect me and doesn’t care about my feelings!” When we listen to our own self-talk we can easily get caught up in what Solomon warned us about:

Ecclesiastes 7:9

“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.”

Before our next lesson use the chart on the next page as a journal for several days to see what you can discover about your triggers.

Keeping a record of what makes you angry will show whether it is always the same things that make you angry or whether it is a range of different things.

Challenge – do this for one week and see what you come up with!

(go to next page for journal page)

Anger Triggers Assignment

My Anger Triggers	Physical Reactions and Thoughts	My Typical Actions	What I Will Do Instead
1. David refuses to do his chores.	1. My face gets flushed and my heart starts pounding. I think, "What do I have to do to get you to move!"	1. Yelling, ordering, threatening.	1. Go to my room; take a time out; pray. 2. Go back to David and restate his job, and then say: When you refuse to do your job, I feel angry because we depend on everyone to carry their weight in the family. I expect you to complete your job before you go to your friend's house.

If you have any questions about his content or series feel free to email me at: tim@highdesertchurch.com

In our next session, Session 3, we will look at “How To Deal With Everyday Anger Issues.” Here is where we will begin to look at principles and tools that will help us more effectively manage your anger!