



Session 4: Red Mist



Anger is the first issue that Jesus addresses in the Sermon on the Mount and he implies that we can actually learn to live without anger.

However God gave us the capacity to get angry – because it is the correct response to injustice. It is possible to be like Jesus and get angry over injustice and still not sin.

Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

Read

Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Mark 11.12–26

When Jesus and his disciples left Bethany the next morning, he was hungry. From a distance Jesus saw a fig tree covered with leaves, and he went to see if there were any figs on the tree. But there were not any, because it wasn't the season for figs. So Jesus said to the tree, "Never again will anyone eat fruit from this tree!" The disciples heard him say this.

After Jesus and his disciples reached Jerusalem, he went into the temple and began chasing out everyone who was selling and buying. He turned over the tables of the money changers and the benches of those who were selling doves.

Jesus would not let anyone carry things through the temple. Then he taught the people and said, "The Scriptures say, 'My house should be called a place of worship for all nations.' But you have made it a place where robbers hide!" The chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses heard what Jesus said, and they started looking for a way to kill him. They were afraid of him, because the crowds were completely amazed at his teaching.

That evening, Jesus and the disciples went outside the city.

As the disciples walked past the fig tree the next morning, they noticed that it was completely dried up, roots and all. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree. Then Peter said, "Teacher, look! The tree you put a curse on has dried up."

Jesus told his disciples: Have faith in God! If you have faith in God and don't doubt, you can tell this mountain to get up and jump into the sea, and it will. Everything you ask for in prayer will be yours, if you only have faith. Whenever you stand up to pray, you must forgive what others have done to you. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your sins.

Setting the scene:

- Less than a week before Jesus would be crucified, he and the disciples are in Jerusalem for the Passover festival. Initially it looks like Jesus was simply in a bad mood – hungry and irritated with a fig tree! But this is symbolic – Jesus knew it wasn't the season for fruit. He was making a point about the coming destruction of the Temple because God's people were all 'show' (leaves) and no substance (fruit).
- Some lessons are better illustrated. The account of Jesus clearing the Temple is sandwiched between the two parts of the story of the fig tree. Jesus is angry because the Temple was meant to be a place of worship for all people – the Gentile (non-Jewish) area for worship had been rendered inoperative because of all the petty cheating, haggling and money-changing in the place of God's presence. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 56 – reminding the people that this is meant to be a place of worship for Gentiles as well as the Jews.
- Throughout the Old Testament we often see God's righteous anger. Here in the New Testament, Jesus is displaying the same righteous anger.

Reflect

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. When did you last get really angry? What were the circumstances surrounding this?

Q2. Is it okay to be angry sometimes? When might anger be justified?



'A quick-tempered man does foolish things.'

Proverbs 14.17



Respond

Red Mist Challenge: this session leads us to explore the topic of anger and frustration. As a group, create a challenge to help you reflect and respond appropriately to these emotions or choose one of the following ideas.

Challenge ideas:

1. Justice – not just-us

Ephesians 4.26-27 explores the idea of appropriate anger – holy anger. God gave us the emotion of anger to use constructively to defend the poor and to spur us on to work towards justice. Jesus got angry at injustice and unfairness. He used his anger to bring peace. Sometimes we get angry about small things – but what are the bigger injustices you can direct your anger towards? What is the bigger fight for you enter? Where can you make a difference and get involved?

2. Look back at anger

Take some time this week to reflect on the times you have been angry, frustrated or irritated. Reflect on what happened – did you say something you now wish you hadn't? Did you break something? Where did your anger lead? Try to work out the root of your anger or frustration – are there other factors involved such as lack of sleep? Stress? Pride or a damaged ego? Take some time to be with God and bring these issues before him.

3. Sabbath

Anger can be about unmet expectations and fear. Sabbath is about trusting God. Anger can be about control. Sabbath teaches us to allow God to take care of things and to relax. Pick a day when you will rest from the worries and concerns of life and just eat, sleep, play and enjoy the day with God and others.

Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to develop and maintain a life of transparency, honesty, humility and integrity.