

Monday and Tuesday

Read Matthew 5:21-22

Let's think of a practical way to let go of your anger and resentment. IRL is texting lingo for *In Real Life*. Life doesn't get any more real than mastering your anger in what it can do for you and the world, so I've repurposed IRL for us this morning so that we have a process for dealing with our anger. If you want to live the real life Jesus wants you to live, mastering your anger is foundational.

I – Identify your resentments. It is tricky to deal with something you don't recognize. You need to spend some time thinking about the anger you carry with you and with who or what you are angry. Pray and ask God to have the Holy Spirit help you in seeing your anger. Then take a concrete step so that these resentments don't stay in your head: write them down, tell them to someone, record a voice memo on your phone. Make them real in time and space. I urge you to do this today or this week. It won't be the only time you should do it, but get in this practice.

When you've identified your resentments, then **R – release them to Jesus**. Your anger and resentments bounce around in your mind but are held deep in your heart and soul. Visualize and maybe even act out grabbing your anger from your chest and handing it to Jesus. Give it to him. He wants it. He did away with its power in his death and resurrection, but he wants you to give them up so he can take care of it. You can also act this out with the practice of throwing your resentments in a fire – as the baptism we received was by the Holy Spirit and fire, we can enact the purifying of the fire by putting our resentments in the fire. When you've written them down and are ready to release them, light a fire in your fireplace or firepit, take a moment to reflect, and toss that paper in the hot fire. Watch it quickly burn away. That is what Jesus does with your anger and resentments when you release them to him. He burns them away.

When you've identified your resentments and released them to Jesus, you can **L – live in control**. Your anger does not control you, you

control your anger because you have mastery over it and have given it to Jesus. In the grace and refining fire of Jesus Christ, you are no longer a victim of your anger. When you've engaged in the reflective practices of listing out your anger and resentments and given them to Jesus, you will be ready to do those practices in the moment. When you find yourself getting angry, identify why you are angry and release it to Jesus. You are in control as you give yourself over to Jesus. And Jesus is shutting down your anger factory. When you practice IRL, you keep the anger factory mothballed. When you feel like you want to fire the factory back up, remember that Jesus helped you shut it down.

Wednesday

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-5, 17

We tend to think that we only have a set amount of anger, a kettle of anger, so if we "blow off a little steam" by having an angry outburst, we will run out of anger, the kettle will be dry, and we will be happy and well-adjusted. This is absolutely false. You do not have a set amount of anger in your life that you just need to get rid of. You have an anger factory. When you clear the warehouse of all that anger you've created, the factory has more room to produce more anger. Study after study has shown that angry outbursts lead to more anger and aggression only creates more aggression. Soon anger becomes your habitual pattern. It's a pattern that will run your life and ruin your life without you paying much attention.

Jesus commands you to master your anger or be thrown in the landfill. *Gehenna* is the word Jesus uses that gets translated as hell in our passage in English and Gehenna is the town trash fire. So, unless you'd like to be thrown in the trash fire, you should shut down your anger factory, because your anger is killing you, your loved ones, our society, and your discipleship. The disciples of Jesus are not angry people.

How have you tended to think about your anger – as a kettle needing to let off some steam or as a factory that keeps churning out anger? How will you benefit from thinking of your anger as a factory and not a kettle?

Thursday

Read Proverbs 19:11

If you couldn't tell by the sermon, I think anger is just about the number one problem facing society and Christianity. So much of what has gone haywire has its roots in anger. Here is a reminder of some of what anger does to you and those around you.

Your anger is killing you, the ones you love, and ripping apart society. Two hours after an angry outburst your chance of having a heart attack doubles and your chance of having a stroke triples. Your anger weakens your immune system by causing a dip in the immunoglobulin A antibody which is your body's first line of defense against infections. People who are persistently angry and have angry outbursts have lower lung function – the stress hormones inflame your airways. Anger worsens anxiety and depression.

If you think the solution is to repress your anger instead of having those outbursts, you are wrong. People who repress their anger as a personality trait have twice the risk of developing coronary disease, high blood pressure, skin disorders, and digestive problems. People who repress their anger suffer the same effects to anxiety and depression.

Anger is the root of abuse: physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and spiritual. It is the root of spouse abuse and child abuse. Anger is the root of violent behavior and most crime. Anger rips apart relationships and families.

Anger is tearing apart society. I encourage you to think about America in the 21st century. Anger builds upon anger. In fact, people don't even think you care about something unless they can tell that you are angry about it. I know that I've chosen to appear angry when I'm not actually angry simply to get people to realize that I want to be taken seriously. Our whole social discourse seems to be resting on the roots of anger.

Spend some time today praying for the angry.

Friday

Each week in 2022, we are praying for the most dangerous places to be a follower of Jesus. Please spend today in prayer for Jordan and the Christians in Jordan. You can get more info, and this info comes from, here: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

What is life like for Christians in Jordan?

Compared to Christians living in other Middle Eastern countries, most Christians in Jordan live a safe and stable life, and enjoy a relatively high level of religious freedom. However, Christians still experience discrimination in employment and restrictions against public preaching. Unrecognized churches can face harassment by public authorities, particularly those that actively evangelize. Open testimony of faith by a Christian who converted from Islam can lead to beatings, arrest and even death.

Areas for prayer:

- Pray for Christians who worship in unregistered churches. Pray they would be able to continue to worship.
- Pray for followers of Jesus who left Islam. Pray they wouldn't be oppressed or ostracized by their families.
- Pray for leaders in Jordan, that they would be increasingly open to religious freedom.