

LIVING  
IT OUT

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# DAILY BIBLE STUDY

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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Road Rage and Jesus.

Monday, May 15, 2017

What's one of your pet peeves? Is it when someone chews with their mouth open? Maybe it's when someone uses the word "seen" in a sentence inappropriately. For me, it's bad drivers. I'm not sure that anyone else in the world took a driver's education course but me. Other people either drive too close to me, drive too slow in front of me, neglect to use their turn signal when changing lanes, don't know how to merge, or simply cannot drive. One of the more infuriating mistakes everyone (not including me because I'm a perfect driver) makes is when they back up traffic because they're looking at what's going on to the side of the road instead of just pressing forward. My family always called it "rubber-necking." I cannot put into words how angry I get when I am sitting in traffic for what seems like forever only to realize that the backup was caused by nothing but rubber-necking. I might yell, "Drive your car and pay attention to the road, you're causing a backup!" to those vehicles ahead of me. The term road rage was created because of people like me.

You see, everyone else on the road is a bad driver. You might be reading this thinking, "Not me! I'm a good driver. It's everyone else who can't merge!" Or, "not me, I follow all the rules! It's everyone else that drives poorly." But that can't be true because, as I've already explained, everyone else is a bad driver, I'm the good one.

As ridiculous as this sounds - and it should've sounded ridiculous - this is how I feel most of the time on the road. I know I'm not a perfect driver. I've accidentally cut people off, I've followed too closely, I've changed lanes without using a turn signal, and I've merged horribly (sometimes). When this happens, I expect those around me to give me a little grace and just know that I made a mistake. Unfortunately, when other people on the road make mistakes, I do not give them the benefit of the doubt; I get angry.

This past weekend, Ben spoke about the villain of anger and defined it as "aggressively wanting to control what you cannot control." If this doesn't describe my road rage, I don't know what does. When people don't drive the way I want them to, I get angry. I think to myself, "*Why would they do that!?*" I want them to drive how I expect them to drive, and when they don't, I get angry. This is my aggressively wanting to control what I cannot control.

This doesn't just happen with driving, however. Anger manifests itself in many areas of our lives. When our relationships with people become difficult, we might get angry; if we experience continuous difficulties at work, we

might get angry; and the list goes on and on. What do we do? If anger is aggressively wanting to control what you cannot control, then what do you do when you're angry?

Ben gave us a simple acronym to remember that can help us in these situations: AIRR.

**Admit**  
**Identify**  
**Rest**  
**Reach Out**

When we are angry, we need to **Admit** the aggression, **Identify** the burden, **Rest** in the one who is in control, and **Reach** out for what we can do now.

In one instance, Jesus tells us what to do in the midst of trying circumstances, which can include anger.

In Matthew 11, Jesus says one of the most peace-giving statements in the Scriptures. He says,

### **Matthew 11:28-30**

*<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."*

Directly before this passage, Jesus talks about how when someone knows Jesus, it is a gift from God. This gift is offered freely from Jesus to us. What's important to note, however, is that the gift of salvation is not merely about entrance into heaven. It should radically impact our lives here on earth. This is what it means to be in the Kingdom of God. When Jesus says to us, "I will give you rest," he means it. Yes, he wants to give you rest from the law and its requirements, but he also wants to give you rest from the everyday problems you will encounter, including anger.

He continues and says, "Take my yoke upon you... for my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." A yoke is a piece of wood that fastens across the backs of animals in order for them to pull a heavy load. Often, we are carrying around such a heavy burden that it can be hard to press on. When we don't deal with our anger, it can greatly contribute to this burden. In this, our yoke becomes heavy. Jesus wants to give us rest from many things,

including our anger. This isn't to say that Jesus is promising an easy life. On the contrary, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and be willing to risk everything for his sake. However, this doesn't mean there aren't burdens he is willing to bear for us, including our anger. If we just take it to him by **Admitting, Identifying, Resting, and Reaching** out, we can experience what it's like to carry the light yoke that Jesus promises us.

What typically causes your anger?

How do you respond?

If there's something in your life currently that's causing you some anger? How can you practice **AIRR**?

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your grace and mercy. I know that you promise me a yoke that is easy to bear and that this not only pertains to my salvation, but also my everyday life. Help me to deal with the things that make me angry in a positive way. Help me to rest in you. I ask all this in Jesus' name, amen.*

# When Anger Controls You.

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Even Jesus got angry!

Let's face it, we all get angry. The Apostle Paul got angry, and yes, even Jesus got angry. But when we look at this verse from Ephesians we see that it is not the feeling of anger itself that is the problem, it is our reaction to that feeling. How do you behave when you're angry? Does the anger control you? That is where sin enters into the equation.

I think we get a little confused by this passage and maybe when thinking about anger in general. Anger in and of itself is not bad. It is an emotion that we all face every day. God gave us our emotions, so it really can't be bad. In fact, righteous anger, such as Jesus' anger towards the Pharisees or the money changers in the temple, was completely justified. They were behaving badly and hurting people. When we see injustice in the world we should be angry. That can be, and usually is, the impetus for change. The problem is actually twofold. First, we tend to get angry about things that are not worthy of anger, and second, when we get angry, we usually don't handle it properly. When we allow our anger to boil over, causing us to say or do things that are hurtful to others, that is sin.

"Don't go to bed angry." This saying is often given as advice to couples as they begin their life together, but I know I didn't get it. Chasing my husband around the house telling him "we have to resolve this so I can go to bed" didn't go over so well sometimes! Rather than haranguing him, what I needed to do was resolve my own feelings. I am responsible for myself and my actions, not his or anyone else's for that matter. The point is for me to control my feelings and to figure out what is causing those feelings.

One of the fruit of the spirit talked about in the memory verse for this series is self-control. Oh, and kindness and gentleness, let's not forget those! If I am allowing the Holy Spirit to live in me, then I am able to have anger but not let it have me. So, when I feel myself getting angry, I need to remember to respond rather than react. The difference is presence of mind and thought. If I react, that is knee jerk and usually not good! That is where the sin enters in. I say or do something in reaction to my emotions. On the other hand, if I thoughtfully respond, I can be angry and be reasonable. Being angry isn't necessarily sinful, though it most likely will lead to sin. When we are angry, we need to fight against it. And, as Paul tells us, we need to deal with it. As

Ben explained this weekend, and as we unpack his message through this week, we will learn some practical ways to do just that.

**Ephesians 4:26-27**

*<sup>26</sup>And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup>for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*

When you get angry, do you respond or react?

How is reacting giving “a foothold to the devil?”

**Prayer:**

*Father, thank you for giving me a mind that can think and reason. I praise you for sending the Holy Spirit to guide me and produce good fruit in me. Help me to live by the Spirit and not let anger control me. Amen.*

# Why You Should Talk to Someone When You're Angry.

Wednesday, May 17, 2017

"Are you *sure* you're not mad?"

"I said, *I'm fine*."

We've all been there, whether on one side of the conversation or the other. Honestly, we've all probably been on both sides at least once in our lives—as we discussed yesterday, everyone gets angry. So why is it so hard to admit when we're mad?

Confessing sins is never easy, and anger (the unhealthy kind) is no exception. But the first step to solving any problem is admitting the problem exists. As it says in James 5:16, we must "confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." Confessing the sin of anger can help us heal the broken relationship between us and whoever we're upset with, but even if nothing needs mended, or the other person isn't interested in mending things, confessing still heals us as individuals. We gain nothing by holding a grudge.

So, who should you confess your anger (the unhealthy kind) to? First and foremost, you must confess your sin to yourself. Those of you who already know you're angry may roll your eyes at that, but there are also those who haven't yet accepted they're angry. Even if you know you're angry, you might not think you're doing anything wrong—we'll talk about that tomorrow. For now, search your heart. Have you been holding onto anger against someone without admitting it? Have you knowingly held onto your anger, but refuse to confess it as a sin?

Once you've admitted your anger to yourself, you need to confess it to at least two others: God and another person. You must pray to God, admitting and repenting of your anger. Sometimes it helps to confess your anger to a friend who is removed from the situation. James 5:16 also says, "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." If you're having difficulties getting past your anger, find a person whose faith and wisdom you respect and explain the situation. But be careful you don't succumb to gossiping when explaining your anger—this is about dealing with the plank in your own eye, not the speck in someone else's. Then ask this person to pray with you, asking God for forgiveness if you haven't already, and for help in resolving your anger.

You might also feel the need to discuss the reasons for your anger with the offending party. If so, you should also apologize to the person for your anger. Remember, apologizing for being angry with someone doesn't condone their actions, just as forgiving them for their behavior doesn't mean it was acceptable. Still, because Jesus calls us to lead lives of love, we must apologize and forgive. If it helps, you can ask the friend you prayed with to help mediate between you and the offending party. Whether you decide to discuss it with a mediator or privately, always remember to do so with love.

**James 5:16**

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.*

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, please give us the wisdom to recognize when we sin through anger, and give us the humility to confess our sins. Thank you for your forgiveness, freely offered. If our anger has caused a rift between us and others, help us to mend it. Above all, help us to love others as you love us. Amen.*

# John McEnroe and Your Anger.

Thursday, May 18, 2017

In the summer of 1981, 22-year-old tennis phenom John McEnroe was battling fellow American Tom Gullikson in a first-round match on Wimbledon's famed Centre Court. Along with his requisite tennis whites, McEnroe sported long, curly locks tucked under a navy-blue headband, and an already legendary temper that had prompted the British press to dub him "Super-Brat."

Midway through the match, McEnroe served what he thought was a clear ace down the center stripe of the court. Moments later, he was initially dubious, then quickly enraged, when chair umpire Edward James ruled the shot "out."

"You can't be serious, man. *You cannot be serious!*" an enraged McEnroe screamed at James. "That ball was on the line! Chalk flew up!" he said. For good measure, he later added, "You guys are the pits of the world!"

James proceeded to award a point to McEnroe's opponent as a penalty for the tirade, which was particularly unwelcome at the austere British tennis club. The Wimbledon crowd responded with a rousing cheer in response to what they deemed a richly deserved public scolding.

The irony, of course, is that every member of the crowd that delighted in McEnroe's reprimand for bad behavior had undoubtedly wrestled with the villain of anger themselves. Anger is an unseemly, but unavoidable emotion to which all humans are prone. The primary difference on that midsummer day was that McEnroe's rage was on display for thousands to witness.

Thankfully, few, if any of us have laid our anger out before a crowd of thousands as McEnroe did so often during his tennis career. But the fact remains that we all encounter anger on a regular basis. Our anger may be provoked by a careless driver on the roadway, a rude co-worker or boss, or a rebellious child who wantonly ignores our rules or expectations. Regardless of the circumstances, we've all experienced the flash of anger in response to feeling that we've been disrespected or otherwise done wrong.

Last weekend, lead pastor Ben Snyder defined anger as "aggressively wanting to control what you cannot control." This definition resonates with me when I think about my own dealings with the villain of anger. More often than I would care to admit, I allow injustices – perceived or real – to derail me from thinking or acting in the manner that I know God desires of me. I want to be

treated fairly, to be respected, or even just to be heard. And yes, sometimes I want to control how others view and treat me. While these are not wholly unreasonable desires in and of themselves, I know that becoming angry when I do not receive what I desire is far from righteous behavior.

### **James 1:19-20**

*<sup>19</sup>Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. <sup>20</sup>Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires.*

Often, we are tempted to give in to our anger because we deem it to be “righteous.” Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible for humans, because of our fallen nature, to be righteously angry. This is why James says, “human anger” is not godly anger. We cannot, like God, be angry in a pure way. Our anger will always be infected with sin and, for this reason, he desires that we resist the temptation to rise to anger.

As a young tennis player and fan, I delighted in rooting against John McEnroe. Like the Wimbledon crowd on that long-ago summer day, I detested his boorish behavior. My sports idol as a youth was a quiet and seemingly emotionless Swede named Björn Borg. For several years, Borg was McEnroe’s chief rival on the court, always providing a stark contrast to the American’s brash behavior. What I later learned, however, was that Borg had himself once wrestled with his temper on the tennis court.

“I was a real nutcase,” Borg said in recalling his early years in the game. “I swore, threw my racket around and cheated.” Borg was even once suspended for six months by Sweden’s tennis authorities and banned from practicing at his local club. The experience motivated Borg to control his on-court emotions, which he credited for helping him to win 11 grand slam tournaments (including five consecutive Wimbledon championships).

Borg and McEnroe faced each other 14 times on the professional tour, with each winning seven times. Amazingly, over the course of their “fire and ice” rivalry, McEnroe said he always controlled his temper. “I never acted like a jerk when I played Borg,” McEnroe wrote in his 2002 autobiography (aptly titled, *You Cannot be Serious*). “I respected him too much; I respected the *occasion*.”

And perhaps therein lies yet another compelling reason to fight against the villain of anger. By walking with God and leaving anger to him, we can serve as an example for others to behave in the manner that he desires.

What is your typical response to growing angry?

If it is not anything like getting some AIRR (see Monday), what can you do now to move toward something like that?

**Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, I am so grateful for your love and grace. I ask that you grant me the wisdom to recognize – and the strength to confront – the villain of anger. Help me to walk as you desire and leave the control of this world to you. Amen.*

# Venting Your Anger Isn't Always a Good Idea.

Friday, May 19, 2017

"What a *jerk*! How can someone do this to me? Sorry, I'm just venting, I'm really mad right now at this [fill in the blank]."

Many people lobby that venting anger through explosive language and aggressive actions is a healthy way to cope with a situation, but there is a real danger in giving in to anger. "Venting" is accompanied by one person sentencing and judging an offending party - a right we do not have as fallen, sinful human beings. Be careful not to judge someone else unless you yourself are as perfect as Jesus! God witnesses this behavior and does not approve. God is not the only one who will judge you for this.

Sinking into corrosive thoughts affects all that you do, and everyone around you. Venting will procure fear in your children -- not fear of the offender, but of you, with your loud voice and vicious gestures. Your spouse may try to calm you down, soothe the issue or offer suggestions, but clouded by your anger, you interpret the gestures as him/her taking the offender's side. More explosive behavior, "venting" and hurtful language ensues towards your spouse, damaging your relationship. You expect your friends and family to become martyrs for your cause. After all, you are right. Families are torn apart by this kind of anger, friendships destroyed; the message of love is lost. In time, a personal hell is created just for you as you find yourself isolated.

Anger does, however, serve a godly purpose. It is meant to fuel and energize us to move towards a solution to the original offense, to fix the problem *without* degrading or judging another person. For example, finding out a classmate cannot afford school lunch might make you enraged at his parents for not taking care of their child or it can inspire you to organize a fundraiser to help this family with school lunch money for the remaining school year. Shaming the parents does nothing, but calling your community together in love and kindness to help provide for someone does more than just buy a sandwich. It shares the Gospel of love. The ripple effect from the child, his school, his family and the community is amazing! Retraining yourself to use anger as a source of problem solving is a discipline, an incredible tool to do a great amount of good. It takes time and focus!

To recap our week, we must admit that we get angry. Pray about it and confess our sins in this regard. We must understand that anger itself is not a sin and does, in fact, have a purpose in our lives. Apologize for our anger to the offending party, for we know we are not perfect ourselves. Forgive the

offender as Jesus has forgiven us. Finally, re-channel the anger towards a solution. And through all things, pray.

**Matthew 5:22**

*But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.*

**Prayer:**

*Dear Father, thank you for giving us such amazing, powerful tools to use to your glory. As with all tools, mastery is required. Help us to learn how to use anger for a good purpose instead of destruction. Let it energize us to spread the Gospel and your message of compassion, love and forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.*